NMP

#12/
13

COMICS FEATURE™

DOUBLE FEATURE ISSUE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

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STEVE GERBER
Interviewed

GEN of
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Women and
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What Do You
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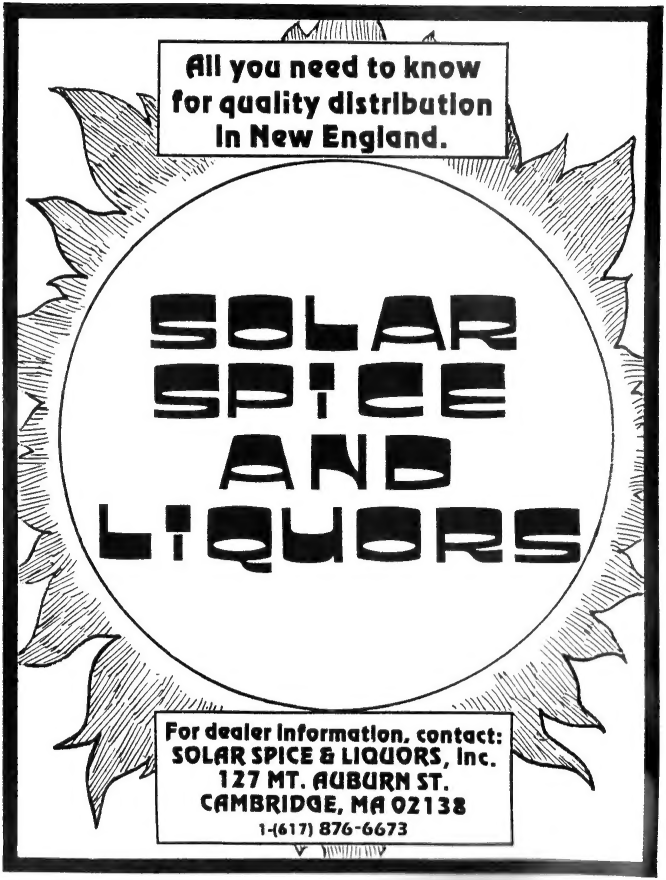
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OPENING NOTES

by Richard Howell

Welcome to issue #12-13 of ***COMICS FEATURE***. Despite numerological superstition, some production setbacks, and some somewhat discouraging staff changes—we don't feel that this is an "unlucky" issue at all. First of all, there's what we consider one of our best covers to date—The Teen Titans by rising fantasy artist Hannah Shapero. Hannah is improving almost daily, and has a great love for the Titans (or the "Teens in Tights," as she calls them). We think both of those opinions are obvious in the cover.

Some people have asked us, by the way, why ***FEATURE*** seemingly sports fewer "pro" covers than its presently-available analogues. Well, we could go into the old song-and-dance about how our editorial offices are in Cambridge (as opposed to most other comics-related specialty magazines, all within easy commuting distance to the Marvel/DC matrix in New York), but the fact that we haven't as easy access to "pro circles" is only part of the reason. One contributing factor is that, frankly, we're somewhat leery of imposing on our friends and acquaintances who are comics professionals, and wouldn't like to ask them to do work for us—essentially as a favor. We certainly can't budget their cover rates into an issue of ***FEATURE***, and we're not about to make any more impositions than we have to.

What's probably the most important reason for the over-riding margin of "fan" covers on ***FEATURE***, though, is the fact that these magazines at one time were universally called "fanzines," and we don't want to get too big for our proverbial britches. In a choice between an enthusiastically-delivered drawing or painting by a young, rising talent, and a hasty "con sketch" by a harried professional who'd rather that the work he can't take time on wouldn't be printed, but doesn't know how to say "no"—well, we'll take the former every time. We think it's better for everybody. Naturally, the commercial market being what it is, if our sales drop and the reason is localized to the fact that ***FEATURE*** doesn't sport enough "big name" covers, then we'll have to change, start being less considerate of our professional contacts, less discriminating about the "completeness" of the cover drawing-or-whatever, and—sadly—less responsive to the needs of the vast plethora of rising, talented young "fan" artists. That's our choice.

(Speaking of rising young artists, by the way, Hannah Shapero has sold her first paperback cover painting. It's to DAW Books, and it's for the next in the ***"Darkover"*** series by Marion Zimmer Bradley. Keep an eye out for it. You can say you knew her work "when.")

In general, things are looking good for ***FEATURE***. We've attracted both a fine stable of contributors and a loyal readership. ***COMICS FEATURE*** (and ***LOC***, incidentally) has

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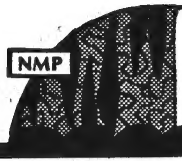
been received warmly in both comics fan and comics professional circles, and ***FEATURE*** is a magazine which we two editors are proud to have helped evolve to its present repute. We enjoy producing ***FEATURE***, and we enjoy both the letters which compliment us on making their writers "feel good about enjoying comics" as we do the approbation and helpful suggestions of the professionals who enjoy ***FEATURE***'s oft-discussed "positive attitude."

Alas, though, such good fortune is rarely unsullied by some measure or other of counter-evolution. First, our release dates have been trammelled unmercifully by a series of problems between the editorial offices (us), the home office (Florida), and the printer (Wisconsin). We continue to untangle whatever snarls occur as they happen, but ***FEATURE*** still suffers from that bane of news organs everywhere—inconstant scheduling.

This issue is late, and so was #11 (and so was #10). That's the reason we decided to combine issues #12 and #13—to get back on schedule. ***FEATURE #14*** should be slightly off schedule, and it should be clear sailing from then on. We mainly regret the problems with the printer on account of what the resultant lateness does to our news section (up to the minute as of when we send it off to be printed, but after that—?). Most of ***FEATURE***, we're happy to say, is quite readable and valuable in and of itself, whether or not it's fronted by "scoops." That means that you think so, too, and we're very glad of it.

And it's hail and farewell to ***Peter Gillis***, former NMP line director, associate editor, and graphic magazine editorial director. Peter has decided that the work-a-day grind of producing two magazine series on a set schedule was not his calling, and has returned to his previous career as a free-lance scripter. Naturally, New Media was first in line to request Peter's scripting talents for their own magazines, and the distinctive Gillis touch will be evident in not only ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED***'s ***"Ransom"*** series, but in another, as-yet-untitled fantasy offering for ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** which pairs P.G. with George Freeman of ***CAPTAIN CANUCK*** fame. A news report on the editorial changeover of the NMP graphic line appears in this issue. Sadly, Peter has elected to discontinue his unique and inimitable ***"Guilty Fantasies"*** column in ***FEATURE***, effective immediately. That means that ***"GF's"*** final installment is this issue's first-of-three parts explanation of why ***"Guilty Fantasies"*** is so hard to write. (A coincidence? Maybe.) We're currently in the market for a new eccentric-humor column, but we don't expect it will be much like Peter's column. ***"Guilty Fantasies,"*** we feel, bears too personal a stamp to warrant imitating.



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MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Larry Gonick, of ***THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE***, interviewed by ***Brad Walker***. pg. 95

AN INTERVIEW WITH *MARV WOLFMAN*

Peter Sanderson and Peter Gillis conduct the first major interview with the co-creator of ***THE NEW TEEN TITANS***. pg. 34

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ANIMATED CHATTER

A critique of the new movie which makes ***"Hush of the Titans."*** ***by Robert Rhodes*** pg.32

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CLASSIC CONVERSATIONS

The conclusion of our interview with Murphy Anderson, detailing his career at DC in the 1960s and 1970s with Julius Schwartz. ***by Paul Kupperberg and Carl Gafford***. pg.150

THE DEAD YET MOVE

A report on Toei's ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** animated movie ***by Peter Sanderson***. pg.58

EVIL DOER'S PROFILES

As an adjunct to SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT, we present a selection of the team's villains. This issue, The Sub-Mariner and Doctor Doom ***by Richard Howell*** pg. 146

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Disney's classic FANTASIA re-examined by FEATURE's classic ***Peter Sanderson*** pg. 155

THE LIGHT AND SHADOW OF ECLIPSE

ECLIPSE, THE MAGAZINE #1, reviewed by ***Marlakan Joplin***. pg.66

THE FANDOM ZONE

Don and Maggie Thompson talk about ***"Getting Together"*** in the early days of fandom, in the first of ***two "Fandom Origins"*** columns this issue. pg. 110

"Fandom Exposed" in 1965, the second in ***Don and Maggie Thompson***'s double-play for this issue. pg. 105

Plus comics clubs, a special ***"Fandom Zone"*** cover, and ***20 Years Ago This Month"*** for two months. pg. 103

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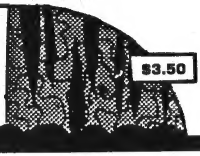

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A NUCLEAR FAMILY

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AZAM IN IE 1970S

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AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVE GERBER

The creator of Howard and Stewart talks about life, comics, and things. *by Peter Sanderson and Peter Gillis* pg. 114

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IILTY TASIES

not liked the GUILTY FAN- *Peter Gillis* why you're doing so. pg. 148

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THE LOST COMICS COMPANIES

Eastern Color Printing Company examined *by Chuck Wooley* pg. 128

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More of what you had to say about past issues. pg. 9

MINING STRIPS

The lighter side of Vikings? Yes, it's HAGAR THE HORRIBLE, examined *by Brian Meyer* pg. 91

OPENING NOTES

More behind-the-scenes doings and don'tings. *by Richard Howell*. pg. 3

SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

The 1960s super-teams come under the eye of our team-master, ***Murray R. Ward***. This issue features a double helping of super-teams as Murray examines the career of The Fantastic Four. pg. 140

Then, The Justice League of America benefit from the famous ***"Super Team Spirit"*** educated hindsight. *by Murray Ward* pg. 83

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A VAMPIRE?

Kurt Busiek recounts and analyzes Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan's remarkable tenure on Marvel's ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** series—and discusses why it's so remarkable. pg. 59

WOMEN AND POWER

Margaret O'Connell endeavors to analyze the link between super-heroines and power junkies. pg. 77

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Cover by Richard Howell and Hannah Shapero

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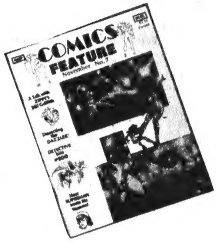
#4 features a John Byrne cover, unpublished pages from the original version of ***X-MEN #137,*** and the inside story on why Jean Grey had to die! As if that weren't enough, #4 also contains an interview with Denny O'Neil, a special preview of Art Spiegelman's ***RAW*** magazine, and The Silver Age of Comics, Part III, Available now for $4.00.

Issue #5 features an interview with Steve Englehart, the Fandom Zone, The Silver Age of Comics, Part IV, Collecting Original Art for Fun and Profit, and lots more. $3.00.



COMICS FEATURE #6 spotlights Len Wein. Plus The Silver Age of Comics, Part v, the beginning of a series on the Women in ***TERRY AND THE PIRATES,*** and a look at the European comics scene. $2.00.

Issue #7 was a real winner. Dissecting ***THE DAZZLER*** and ***DETECTIVE #500.*** Plus an interview with Zippy's Bill Griffith, and How Superman Treats His Women. $2.00

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MORNING NOTICES

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C. *Frank Hart*
JACKSONVILLE, FL

Dear Editor:

Regarding Paul A. Zuckerman's letter in ***CF #10***, and his comments concerning Curt Swan's work in the late 1950s: It has always been my understanding that Swan's primary inker during this period was Stan Kay. George Klein became the sole inker about July 1959.

Concerning the article "***Assorted Notes***": Your statements to the contrary, there ***was*** a lag of about four months between the arrival of Nos. 9 and 10. I would like to see an interview with John Broome more than any other professional, if you folks can arrange it. Thanks.

Interesting about Stan Kay, Frank. Can you give us more details, like from whence your information originated, and a short list of examples of Swan/Kay work, for those of us who might recognize his distinctive style, yet might not as yet have connected it with any name?

Broome has relocated to Japan, we understand. Regular FEATURE writer Rich Morrissey informs us that various people have tried to get in touch with him there—both via letters and by wandering the streets of Japan's cities looking for Green Lantern fans to contribute instructions to Broome's house—with no luck so far. We'll keep trying. We do have a chat with Gardner Fox scheduled. Will that hold you?

Kay Lenn
CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Dear Editor:

At times the positive attitude of the ***COMICS FEATURE*** is positively appalling. Almost anything in comics wins your unthinking applause. Your cheerful description of John Byrne's sinister plan for ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR*** is a prime example of every current trend in comics, regardless of inclination; you cheerfully announced his vandalistic plan for destruction on a cosmic scale as if it were the best thing since the disposable diaper.

You're entitled to your opinion of our opinions and output, of course, Kay, but we'll have to disagree. Perhaps the most telling argument against your objection to our "positive attitude" is that our cheerful description of John Byrne's plans appeared in a Convention Report—a news function, and, in our opinion, not the place for opinions. If any of us had reservations about John Byrne's projected killing of Franklin Richards and Zeus-La (not to mention the break-up of Ben Grimm and Alicia Masters), then we feel that the place to state such reservations is either 1) to John Byrne right there and then—and then to report it as part of the Con Report, or 2) in an opinion essay (duly presented as such) about trends in present-day comics or the work of John Byrne, or 3) in a review of the comics in which these events actually occur. Frankly, one of the last things we want to fall into the habit of doing is mixing our opinions in with our news reporting.

It also strikes us as somewhat funny that we'd be put into the position of having to point out examples of reviews we've run and articles we've commissioned that are negative in tone. (This is especially funny in that our competition has the opposite problem. Is there no available happy medium?) No, seriously, it just seems to us that the only way in which one could form an opinion of FEATURE as being "unthinking"-ly approving is that we tend to assign reviews, etc. to columnists who like whatever series, whatever concept, whatever the review will be about. If that produces a magazine which is universally, unthinkingly positive (and we don't think it does), then it'll have to be lived with. What we thought we were doing was allowing our (we think) perceptive and learned staff of critics to critique both the strong and the weak aspects of any creative work—with the emphasis on what about the work appeals to them in the first place. It's very difficult (and ultimately useless) to run neutral reviews, and we have to make a choice about what to stress.

Incidentally, a quick check of our back issues reveals that out of the critical pieces we've published in the last five issues, a consistent 25% or more have been...oh...acerbic in tone. Do you really want more? Remember now, historical articles are not critiques, news columns are not critiques, interviews are not critiques. How "negative" (or "positive") should COMICS FEATURE be? Any comments?

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Jill St. Thomas
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Dear Folks,

I've been enjoying ***COMICS FEATURE*** quite a bit, but there's one thing about your magazine that has always bothered me. Why do you have a news section?I mean, it's obvious that you're having problems with your schedule and all, and the news is duplicated in other places anyway. I mean, I read ***CF*** because it's the only place I know of where I can find articles about topics I'm interested in. If you cut out your news section, you'd have another ten pages you could use for those articles and columns which the other news-oriented mags just don't run.

When we took over COMICS FEATURE we inherited a format which included a news section. Your letter has been the first comment we've received about whether or not a news section is important to our readers. If people write and tell us to expand our news coverage, then that's what we'll do. If on the other hand we received a torrent of demands to scrap the news section and devote the space to other topics... well, let's just say, we'd consider it.

Dear ***CF*** People:

My compliments for a superb cover on ***COMICS FEATURE #11.*** It was brightly colored and brilliantly drawn. Make a poster out of it! (I'll sure buy one!)

I really enjoyed your look at The Justice Society of America. Owning a copy of ***THE ALL-STAR COMICS REVUE***, I knew most of the stuff already, but it did tell me some things I didn't know, such as the histories of Johnny Thunder and Red Tornado (I really like her!) The system used for picking members, and the names of the heroes' girl friends.

Mistake time. Don't worry, ***THE ALL-STAR COMICS REVUE*** made this one, too. You state that the F.B.I. chief was made an Associate Memeber in ***ALL-STAR #9.*** If this is so, why wasn't there a profile on him, like all the others?

Now that ***"Super-Team Spirit"*** has looked at DC's best team, The JSA, why not look at their second-best team, The Super Friends? I eagerly await next issue's Fantastic Four review and I hope Margaret O'Connell will do articles on Invisible Girl and Black Canary soon.

As much as I was pleased with your JSA article, I hated Robert Rhodes' review of ***THE ARISTOCATS.*** Granted, I agree about the use of such words as "square" and "groovin'," but I still think he watched the film in his sleep! He missed so many of the charming aspects of the film. And that stuff about the characters not being interesting was a lot of bull. The film was delightful, with all the Disney magic intact. Next he'll say ***ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS*** was bad! Geesh!

Anyway, congratulations for an intelligent, entertaining, interesting, and always informative book.

And thank you for telling us how much you liked it. It's quite probably that Murray Ward didn't include the F.B.I. chief in the JSA bios because he was only an associate member (the chief, that is—we wouldn't want to question Murray's status with the group), and not a full-fledged super-team member. Then again, maybe nobody knew anything about the F.B.I. chief.

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Also, if you object to any of our reviewers' opinions, great! We like debates, and we love discussions. But your dismissal of Robert Rhodes' critique of THE ARISTOCATS did not include one solid reasons for your objections (claiming that the film was "charming" and "delightful" are hardly convincing). We think that Robert had several good points in his article (including Disney's then-growing dependence on celebrity voices in place of characterizations, the film's laconic pacing—which he explained, and the use of some film footage twice in the same picture). We think that Robert's review contained an ample description of the film's drawbacks, and it would take actual reasoned arguments to convince us (at least), after having read his review, that THE ARISTOCATS was not a substandard Disney production. And there really is no direct relation between thinking THE ARISTOCATS is bad and thinking ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS is bad. We asked Robert and he said, "Does he think I just don't like animals? DALMATIANS is one of my very favorite Disney pictures. It's got a tight plot, it's very visually inventive, it's got a very uncharacteristic (for Disney) snide sense of humor about it—the TV shows, I mean, and it's got one of the most lavidly memorable Disney villainesses ever. Does he want more details?"

Anyhow, The Super Friends will come up in "Super-Team Spirit" in their turn. Remember that Murray is proceeding more-or-less chronologically. Margaret's next opus is in this very issue, and, sad to say, has nothing to do with either Sue Storm Richards or Black Canary (about whom I think Margaret already wrote an article somewhere. We'll ask her about it). And Margaret's essay on the O'Neil/Adams GREEN LANTERN/GREEN ARROW series of the last decade vintage is due to appear in ARTFORM #2 or #3 (not sure yet), and that contains some material on B.C. As for Sue, who knows? Margaret is more prone to composing essays these days which address themes and use characters as examples (as with this issue's "Women and Power" tip-of-the-iceberg), but after she completes that, anything's fair game. As an unabashed plug, check out Margaret's "Comic Books and the Banality of Evil" in the long-awaited ARFORM #1. The editorial staff here think it's probably the finest piece of comics-related scholarship we've yet published.

Jim Korkis
GLENDALE, CA

I noticed in the recent issue that a reader didn't feel you should devote space to animation, specifically Saturday morning animation. It's always easier to write in to complain than it is to compliment. If you want to complain, you have the motivation to write in the first place but if you wish to compliment, you often put aside that very valuable letter. This quick note is just my way of saying that I appreciate you devoting regular space to animation. I read and enjoy ***COMICS FEATURE*** and I was especially pleased when you introduced ***"Animated Chatter"*** sinone of my major interests is animation. With more and more people taping animated cartoons onto their videorecorders, I feel we'll be

Supergirl and Streaky, the Supercat, are ©1981 DC Comics

approaching an expansion of animation fandom very shortly. Just the other day I received an invitation to join an apa devoted solely to animation! I felt your reply to the concerned reader about the "waste of space" was excellent and I'm glad you'll be continuing to showcase animated antics and, when appropriate, expand that coverage. There are probably lots of folks out here in fandom who also appreciate your attention to fandom. But they are probably too pleased to write.

Well, that's one of the nicest ways to explain why we don't get much mail that we've heard yet—we're pleasing too many people! Thanks, Jim, and listen, whenever you want to write us an "Animated Chatter," go right ahead. Our poor overworked staff of animation experts (Paul Dini and Robert Rhodes, with occasional help-outs from the editors), is capable, but would appreciate a respite—as much as we'd appreciate widening our coverage of the field.

Kurt S. Olsson
CONCORD, MA

Dear Richard and Carol:

Finished reading ***FEATURE #11*** much too soon after receiving it this weekend, so I decided to write this note to let you know. The quality of ***FEATURE*** on a whole is increasing issue by issue, and I, for one, hope there is no end in sight—the industry and fandom really need a good outlet for creative criticism, rather than a stewpot for, when everything is tallied up, useless invectives.

Although the Roy Thomas interview was the real meat of the issue, I'll let other, more knowledgable, people comment on it. All I will say was that the interview was very well handled, giving Roy a chance to express his comics philosophy, rather than waxing about the wrongs the industry has committed against-him. In the end, I don't share his views about politics, but his views on comics were well-thought-out—and hard not to agree with.

The Archie—er, ***KA-ZAR*** reviews were interesting, although I doubt I'll be picking up any ***BETTY AND VERONICA***s. I do hope, though, as I'm sure Carol does, that more comics can follow ***KA-ZAR***'s lead; it represensents the direction comics eventually should go (whether they will or not is another question).

The overview of The JSA, likewise, was interesting, even though I felt the story capsulizations ended up just being filler—at today's prices I just can't afford to buy any of those old issues to read. Another thing about that particular article was that I wish Murray had gone into the reason for the split between DC and All-American. A good number of fans may know the reason for the split, but I'm sure others like me would have been interested in knowing the reason(s). And since the make-up of The JSA was based upon the split, I feel that this information really could have been useful to the reader.

All in all, ***FEATURE #11*** was a winner, and if your editorial breaking-in period for this magazine has just ended, I'm sure we readers will be able to look forward to even better things.

Sure, Kurt, as soon as the 47-hour workday is invented. No, really. Glad you liked FEATURE #11. We thought it was the best package we had put out at that time—of course, since then, #12 and #13 have been prepared, and we think each is better than the last. (Hmmm. Now that #12 and #13 have been combined, does that make it/them twice as good as #11?)

Oh, and you and Billy Wanderski (elsewhere in the letters section) can split the FEATURE needle-in-haystack award for finding things that Murray left OUT of that 798-page-manuscript-length JSA article of his!

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150 & Over	3.75	3.75	8.00

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HEADLINES

JACK KIRBY RETURNS

This Summer, Pacific Comics will release the first in their series of comic books. These comics will be physically identical in every way to regular newsstand color comics, except they will be distributed solely through comics specialty "fan shops." Pacific Comics is one of the four or five leading distributors of comics to these shops, and have not been previously involved in the production of comics.

The comics series will be ***CAPTAIN VICTORY AND THE GALACTIC RANGERS***, the latest in a long list of creations by Jack Kirby. Kirby, who with various co-creators (most notably Joe Simon and Stan Lee) first developed such concepts as Captain America, Spider-Man, The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, The X-Men, The New Gods, Kamandi, The Demon, the "kid-gang" strip, and the romance comics genre, has an impressive list of achievements and a large following. He has designed, written, and pencilled six issues of ***CAPTAIN VICTORY*** in between his now-regular work at Ruby-Spears animation studios.

According to Pacific's press release, the ***"Captain Victory"*** concept is as follows:

"Captain Victory and his crew are in pursuit of aliens who represent a beehive society which fastens itself to occupied planets and transforms them into hollow balls criss-crossed by vast networks of tunnels to accomodate the activities of these insect-like humans.

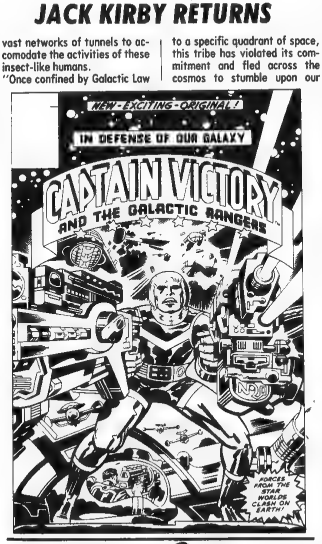
"Once confined by Galactic Law to a specific quadrant of space, this tribe has violated its commitment and fled across the cosmos to stumble upon our planet.

"They are led by Lightning Lady, a sort of queen bee who generates devastating volts of electricity which not only control her minions but also endow them with power of their own to defend the hive. They land near a small town in Pennsylvania, empty its inhabitants and press them into service when the hive building operation begins. This is to be the fate of all humanity when this operation spreads world-wide.

"Captain Victory arrives in his space dreadnaught to apprehend the bee people and get them back where they belong. He brings with him a memorable team of humans and aliens, and a lifestyle hundreds of years in advance of our own."

Current plans call for the six issues to be collected into an "album" format after the six-issue series is completed. Kirby states, though, that there are elements in the first series which could be utilized as the springboard to a continuation of ***CAPTAIN VICTORY***. Kirby's schedule—and sales—will tell.

The thirty-two page package of ***CAPTAIN VICTORY*** will contain at least 28 pages each of new story material—probably more—and will retail for $1.00. The artwork will be inked by Kirby's long-time collaborator Mike Royer, who will also be lettering the series. The color guides will be done by Steve Oliff.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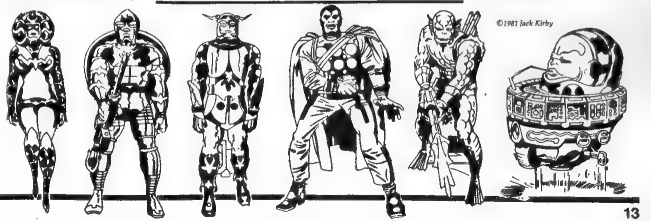

STEVE GERBER AND JACK KIRBY COLLABORATE ON THE "MANSLAYING MALLARD OF VENGEANCE"

BENEFIT FOR GERBER LAWSUIT

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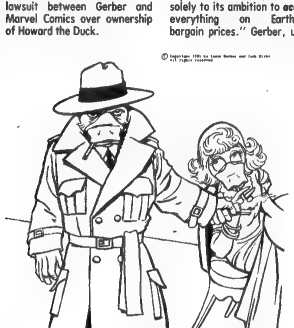
A one-shot comic book called ***DESTROYER DUCK*** will be issued this fall. The comic is notable in that this premiere adventure of the "Manslaying Mallard on a Mission of Vengeance" is a collaboration between Steve Gerber and Jack Kirby—their first—and also in that the package is a self-declared benefit fund-raiser for the lawsuit between Gerber and Marvel Comics over ownership of Howard the Duck.

The adventures of ***DESTROYER DUCK*** involve the Manslaying Mallard's mission to "our" time continuum to avenge the murder of his friend, another duck known only as The Little Guy. Destroyer Duck's quest for vengeance pits him against the assassin hordes of ***Godcorp, Ltd.***, an "unliving entity, incapable of creation, dedicated solely to its ambition to ***acquire*** everything on Earth—at bargain prices." Gerber, under questioning, describes the tale as "a fable of sorts."

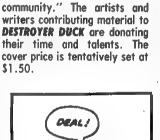


DESTROYER DUCK will also contain a strip named "***Groo the Wanderer***," concerning a "new and hilarious sword-and-sorcery hero." Art and story will be by Sergio Aragones.

"***Great Moments in Comic Book History***" will also be spotlighted (in two separate episodes) concerning fictionalized, but not hyperbolized, accounts of real writers and real artists and their unreal experiences with editors and publishers."

There will be additional contributions by Mark Evanier, Martin Pasko, Scott Shaw, Shary Flenniken, and others.

destroyer duck will be identical to a standard newsstand comic in format. It will be printed at Sparta and with four-color separations. It will be 32 pages long. Eclipse Enterprises (***SABRE, NIGHT MUSIC, STEWART THE RAT***, etc.) will be financing the printing of Destroyer Duck, at no profit for itself in a "gesture of support for the comic book creative community." The artists and writers contributing material to ***DESTROYER DUCK*** are donating their time and talents. The cover price is tentatively set at $1.50.



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MARVEL EXPERIMENTS WITH DIRECT-SALES SERIES

KA-ZAR, MOON KNIGHT, ALSO CONVERTED

Despite earlier reports to the contrary, Marvel's ***MICRONAUTS*** comic has *not* been cancelled. Indeed, it and two other titles, ***MOON KNIGHT*** and ***KA-ZAR***, will be transformed into the industry's first direct-sales-only continuing series. The three books will be re-packaged slightly to better appeal to the fan-shop market. They will each contain 28 pages of story material, with no ads. Current plans call for these direct sales books to retail for 75¢. They will each remain on their normal monthly schedules. Marvel direct sales liaison Mike Friedrich commented that, although no official editorial decision had been announced, it was assumed that the extra story pages would be utilized to extend the main story in each issue, and there would be no back-up features to fill the new page counts. It is further expected that each series' regular creative team will continue on their titles.

The rumors of the possible cancellation of ***THE MICRONAUTS*** arose out of the fact that the book had indeed been suffering in newsstand sales, and was a strong contender for cancellation. This was aggravated by the fact that the series' writer, Bill Mantlo, and its artist, Pat Broderick, were finding it increasingly more difficult to properly mesh their differing creative approaches to the series' presentation. Mantlo had wanted to phase out the tiny team's adventures on Earth and concentrate on the unlimited environment of the Microverse, but editorial intervention brought The Micronauts back to Earth time and again, to establish a recognizable background for the characters' adventures and to play up one of the characters' major distinctions: that The Micronauts are tiny people. This edict's success with the creative team was compounded by the fact that Mantlo felt unable to effectively frame stories around The Micronauts' interaction with normal-sized, "giant" human beings as long as Broderick remained unwilling to visually reiterate the size difference aspect of the plots, and play up the differences between the human environment and the miniscule Micronauts. With Mantlo caught in the middle and becoming increasingly more dissatisfied with the manner in which the art was directing the storyline, general creative enthusiasm for the project declined sharply. A missed deadline by Broderick and a rushed, fill-in art job by Val Mayerik in the climactic issue of the final installment of the ***"Origin of the Microverse"*** six-parter inspired Mantlo to call it quits on the series. He and ***MICRONAUTS*** editor Tom DeFalco reportedly asked Jim Shooter if the book could be cancelled with issue #37, and Shooter agreed. Shooter, however, was apparently under the misapprehension that the sales on ***THE MICRONAUTS*** were not strong enough to warrant the series' being revamped, but that was not exactly the situation. Fortunately for ***MICRONAUTS*** readers, the accounting department argued that since the series been very strong in the profitable direct sales market, an effort to save the series should be made.

Several editorial conferences later, the series **was** saved. Mantlo believes that most of his earlier problems with the book are well on their way to being solved, and he is now eager to take up the storyline once again. Current plans call for The Micronauts to have several Earth-based adventures which will be mixed with forays into the Microverse or other "spacey" environments. No regular penciller has been assigned to the revived series. Either Tom DeFalco or Al Milgrom will edit.

Marvel's decision to transform ***THE MICRONAUTS*** into a direct sales format signalled a radical new direction in Marvel's marketing approach. The fact that the direct sales experiment was expanded to include two other series as well (also both strong sellers in the direct market) indicates that the decision to develop a direct sale format was not designed solely to rescue ***THE MICRONAUTS*** series. It seems instead that Marvel is choosing to actively investigate the strength of the direct sales market, and there is some chance that other titles might follow ***KA-ZAR***, ***MOON KNIGHT***, and ***THE MICRONAUTS*** into the "arena of no returns."

This is the first instance of any major comics company choosing to restrict a title for the express purpose of getting it to the burgeoning fan-shop circuit, a sales arena that is less than ten years old. The potential savings which Marvel could reap from following this route are enormous. In the first place, Marvel will no longer be liable for costly returns of unsold copies of the titles, and secondly, the print runs of each issue can be adjusted to correspond directly to the issue's pre-sale orders. Third, Marvel can confidently expect that those books which are sold to the direct market will be advantageously displayed and not left in some distributor's warehouse, since the direct sales retailer is obligated to pay Marvel for his copies whether or not they are sold. Furthermore, the move to a specific comics fan-dominated marketplace will allow Marvel to accomodate more closely the desires of the "committed" comics buyer. Fan-favorite artists and writers can be assigned to the direct sales series, and the unconventional story lines more suited to fan interests can be pursued without running the risk of alienating the more casual newsstand buyer.

Marvel's direct sales experiment could possibly segregate their own line into direct sales series and newsstand series, and could conceivably change the direction of the industry. It is an experiment worth watching.

SONJA SNAFUS

Marvel has lost the rights to the character Red Sonja. Sonja, who was modeled by Roy Thomas and Barry Windsor-Smith from a woman warrior named Sonya is one of **"Conan"** creator Robert E. Howard's lesser-known stories. Apparently no one in Marvel's editorial department knew that Marvel had to feature Red Sonja in a comic once a year in order to maintain their use of her. Had it not been for the recent ***MARVEL PREVIEW*** featuring Howard's Kull, Marvel would also have lost that character, as well as his Solomon Kane and Bran Mak Morn, whose usage is also governed by the agreement covering Kull. Marvel will probably try to negotiate to regain the rights to Sonja. The **"Red Sonja"** stories by Chris Claremont and John Bolton for ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES #28*** had been partially rewritten and redrawn, to feature a heroine now known as Marada the She-Wolf. (A previously reported, Bolton had already designed a new costume for Sonja and it was used throughout the book for Marada.)

Presently, though, the story, whether **"Sonja"** or **"Marada,"** is being inventoried and will not appear in ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES #28.*** Jim Shooter would not comment on the reasons for withdrawing the Sonja story apart from saying that there are problems because the artist, England's John Bolton, lives so far away, and that it is "very likely we will be publishing a lot more **"Sonja,"** but not at the moment."

Replacing the woman warrior in ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES #28*** will be a selection of martial artists: Elektra (10 pgs.) by Frank Miller (script and pencils—Miller may ink the story if time allows), a ninja story by Neal Adams, Doug Moench, and Larry Hama (20 pgs.), and a 17-page story by Archie Goodwin and Mike Golden entitled **"Huntsman."** That issue will also contain a two-page **"Bucky Bizarre"** send-up of martial artists, and an 8-page **"Triton"** story by Mary Jo Duffy and Wendy Pini.

CLASSIC REPRINTS

The very first **"Spider-Man"** story, from ***AMAZING FANTASY #15***, will be reprinted in ***MARVEL TALES #136***; the following issue will reprint ***AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #1***, and succeeding ***MARVEL TALES*** will reprint the rest of the original Stan Lee/Steve Ditko ***SPIDER-MAN*** issues in order. The very first **"Dr. Strange"** stories, from ***STRANGE TALES #110-111***, also by Lee and Ditko, will be reprinted as the backups in ***MARVEL TALES #134*** and ***135***, and Dr. Strange's origin story from ***STRANGE TALES #115*** will be the backup in ***MARVEL TALES #136***. The final **"Captain Britain"** installment to appear in ***MARVEL TALES***, which will complete his origin story, will be in issue #133. It has been decided not to continue using **"Captain Britain"** as a backup because the original installments done for British publication had to be cut from eight to five pages, necessitating the creation of too many new pages to bridge story gaps.

FORTHCOMING EPICS

EPIC #8 has a cover by Howard Chaykin and features **"A Little Love, A Little Hate"** by Arthur Suydam, **"Ankhesenamun"** by Trina Robbins, **"Contact"** by Tim Conrad, **"Punk Zone"** by Denny Daley and Mike Saenz, **"Shiny Beast"** by Rick Veitch, and part one of Charles Vess's **"Children of the Stars."** which has been extensively rewritten and redrawn since its appearance in ***THE COMIC TIMES***. The issue also has **"Dream's End,"** The new **"Weirdworld"** serial, **"The Dragon Masters of Klarn,"** begins with a nineteen-page chapter in ***EPIC #9***. The writer is Doug Moench, the artist is John Buscema, Marie Severin is the inker and Steve Oliff is the colorist. The story will run for two or possibly three more parts. The same issue of ***EPIC*** features the final two chapters of **"Metamorphosis Odyssey"** along with a brief interview with its creator, Jim Starlin. The issue will also have **"Heart of the City"** by James Romberger and Margaret Gallagher; the second chapter of Charles Vess's **"Children of the Stars;"** two Kafka stories illustrated by Leo Duranoma; **"Cabin Fever,"** written and drawn by Ralph Reese; **"Set and Match"** by Lee Marrs; a cover by Tim Conrad with an explanatory piece about it by Conrad inside the magazine; and an article by David Kasakove on horror in underground comics.

A comic book biography of Pope John Paul II is being done for Marvel by Mary Jo Duffy, Marie Severin and John Tartaglione. It will be sold only through Catholic bookstores and through direct sales outlets, probably beginning in October.

NEW SERIES AND MINI-SERIES

SURFER, SHOWCASE, ANT-MAN, AND ALPHA FLIGHT

There are three mini-series currently in the works at Marvel. One stars The Vision and The Scarlet Witch, is by Bill Mantlo and Bill Sienkiewicz, and will begin at the end of March, 1982. Bob Layton will write, draw, and ink a **"Hercules"** mini-series that begins at the end of May, 1982. There will also be a Wolverine mini-series written by Chris Claremont. Each mini-series will consist of four issues and will be sold both at newsstands and through direct sales outlets.

The special direct sales only book, ***MARVEL FANFARE***, whose name has been changed back from ***MARVEL SHOWCASE***, will go on sale in December. It will be bi-monthly and cost $1.25.

Stan Lee will script and John Byrne will plot and draw a special 48-page one-shot ***SILVER SURFER*** comic book. This will be the story of the Surfer's return to Zenn-La that Byrne had originally intended to do in ***FANTASTIC FOUR***. Lee has made some suggestions that will be incorporated into Byrne's plot.

Jim Shooter announced at May's New York Creation Convention that Marvel will be doing an ***ANT-MAN*** book and an ***ALPHA FLIGHT*** book as soon as David Michelinie and John Byrne, respectively, can fit it into their schedules.

DC CANCELS ADVENTURE COMICS

DC Comics has cancelled its longest-running continually published title, ***ADVENTURE COMICS***. The title has suffered from poor sales for several years, with the recent ***"Starman/Plastic Man"*** issues' sales being especially dismal. It was hoped that the new ***"Dial 'H' for Hero"*** series would revitalize ***ADVENTURE***'s sales, but apparently such was not the case. The last issue of ***ADVENTURE*** will be #490, the February, 1982, issue.

ADVENTURE began in December 1935 as ***NEW COMICS***, a title that was changed to ***NEW ADVENTURE*** and then to ***ADVENTURE COMICS*** (as of #31, October 1938). During its run, it has hosted such characters as Superboy, Supergirl, The Legion of Super-Heroes, Green Arrow, Starman, Sandman, Hourman, The Shining Knight, Green Arrow, The Spectre, and Aquaman. Longevity and a distinguished list of alumni could not save the title, though. According to a source at DC, "Whatever we could put into ***ADVENTURE*** now would definitely sell better as issue #1 of its own title." This attitude is supported by the strong direct sales for first issues and low numbers of series, as well as by the interest among the younger collectors to collect series of which they have some real chance of amassing every issue.

The ***"Dial 'H' for Hero"*** series, currently being written by Bob Rozakis and E. Nelson Bridwell, with art contributions by Don Heck and Trevor Von Eeden, will be moved to the back of ***THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY***. It will by doing so displace the ***"Krypto"*** and ***"Strange Encounters of the First Kind"*** series currently alternating in the Teen of Steel's title.

FIRESTORM, SWAMP THING RETURN

FIRESTORM will be scripted by his original writer/creator Gerry Conway, and drawn by Pat Broderick (Firestorm's original penciller, Al Milgrom, is presently an editor at Marvel), and will continue the adventures of the Nuclear Man, who has been kept "alive" through his ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** appearances (and membership) and a back-up feature in ***THE FLASH***. Replacing Firestorm in that book will be ***"Doctor Fate"*** by Marty pasko and Keith Giffen.

swamp thing will be written by Pasko and drawn by Tom Yeates. Pasko was the writer considered for the ***"Swamp Thing"*** revival several years ago, but nothing was actually written at that point, so the new series is starting totally afresh. At press time, Len Wein did not know whether or not Pasko would be continuing the plot-threads from the previous ***SWAMP THING*** run.

JUSTICE LEAGUE #200 ALL-STAR AFFAIR

KUBERT, APARO, PEREZ BOLLAND, GIORDANO, AND INFANTINO

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, DC's primary super-team series of the 1960s, 1970s, and now the 1980s, will be celebrating its 200th issue by expanding to an 80-page package (costing $1.50) containing a 67-page anniversary epic. The story will be constructed in the style of the old ***ALL-STAR COMICS*** series of the 1940s, with a framing sequence surrounding several individual chapters drawn by different artists. In ***JLA #200***, the 30-page framing sequence will be done by the series' regular creators writer Gerry Conway and penciller George Perez. The individual chapters will each be written by Conway and will be team-up affairs: Superman and Hawkman (and Hawkgirl/Hawkwoman, presumably) by Joe Kubert; Flash, The Elongated Man, and Adam Strange by Carmine Infantino; Firestorm and J'onn J'onzz by Pat Broderick; Red Tornado, Phantom Stranger, and Aquaman by Jim Aparo, Wonder Woman and Zatanna by Dick Giordano; Green Lantern and The Atom by Gil Kane; and Batman, Green Arrow, and Black Canary by Brian Bolland. With the exception of Bolland's contribution, each artist will be drawing the adventures of the hero(es) with which he is identified, to one extent or another. Out of those presently available to DC, for instance, Dick Giordano is at least as much identified with Wonder Woman as anyone else—and he drew at least one episode of Zatanna's short-lived series in ***ADVENTURE COMICS*** several years ago. Pat Broderick is not yet identified with Firestorm, but doubtless editor Wein is expecting that he will be, etc. Some characters, such as Red Tornado, are not really associated with any artist, and are "floaters."

JLA #200 will be cover-dated March and will be on sale in November.

One of the JLA's charter members, Green Lantern, will be celebrating his 150th issue in the same month as the JLA's celebration. ***GREEN LANTERN #150*** will feature a 32-page ***GL*** story by the Emerald Warrior's regular team of Marv Wolfman (writer) and Joe Staton (artist). It will also contain a 16-page episode in the ***"Tales of the Green Lantern Corps"*** series by Mike W. Barr and an undetermined artist.

PROBLEMS OVER LEE/KIRBY "COLLABORATION" IN F.F.

FANTASTIC FOUR ANNIVERSARY EPIC IN CONTENTION

Although Jack Kirby "retired" from comics in 1979, he continues to be involved with the medium—both through his animation design functions, such as storyboards for DePatie/Freleng's ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** series in 1980, and through production design for such comic book-y concepts as ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN.*** Kirby continues to receive offers to do more comic book work, from the new alternative publishers as well as from the larger publishing houses, but so far he has refused. Marvel in particular has approached him several times to do more work for them, but Kirby has consistently deferred. To achieve their ends, Marvel is collecting unpublished Kirby story material from their files, and will be releasing it in various packages over the coming months. Marvel's second adaptation of Patrick McGoohan's legendary ***PRISONER*** TV series (the first was by Steve Englehart and Gil Kane, and is likewise unpublished), by Kirby and inker/letterer Mike Royer, is being re-scripted and re-inked, and published in a "fan shop" format. Although Marvel has the right to alter the script and artwork to whatever form meets their standards of publishing quality, the ***PRISONER*** album is being reworked over Kirby's objections.

Along those same lines, the "all-new" ***"Fantastic Four"*** back-up story set to appear in The FF's 20th Anniversary Issue (#236) is actually a collection of Kirby storyboards from the ***FF*** TV show. The boards have been re-cut, dialogued by Stan Lee, and inked, and are being used without any additional payment to Kirby or with his permission. Again, Marvel is legally quite within their rights to utilize material from DePatie/ Freleng's licensed version of Marvel's own property if it is cleared with DePatie/ Freleng—which this was—and put it to whatever use they wish. Kirby's lawyer, however, has notified Marvel that the rough storyboard work was not designed for comics page publication, reflects badly on Kirby's reputation because of that, and has forbidden Marvel to use the Kirby name in association with this project. At press time, ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** editor Jim Salicrup told *CF* that he had been unaware of any problems between Kirby and Marvel about this collaboration, and that the project was represented to him as something that was already worked out: "If this was my idea and I was pushing for it," commented Salicrup, "naturally, I'd go around and clear it with everybody. But when I'm handed a completed script and pencils [from Stan Lee, in this case], I don't go back-tracking to ask if I can do the project."

AND EVEN AS VICTORY PROSPECT RELATIVE HIS GRATIFIED HEART,
NOW THAT I'VE DEMONSTRATED TO DOCTOR DOOM THROUGH MY ACTIONS THAT I'M NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH!
I'LL TAKE THE CROWN AND SCEPTER, DOOM, OR DO YOU THINK PRINCE NAMOR WILL CLAIM THEM AS PART OF HIS BOOTY?
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Doctor Doom, the fantastic Four's master villain, who is featured in the anniversary special Lee/Kirby "collaboration."

The plot of the Lee/Kirby "collaboration" is basically a re-telling of ***FF #5***, with Doctor Doom and Blackbeard's treasure. The sequence with Doom's origin was removed for space reasons, leaving a 14-page version of the original 20+ page epic. As was the case on the TV show, The Human Torch will be replaced by Herbie the Robot. Editor Salicrup attempted to have every available ***FF*** inker do at least a page of the book, resulting in Kirby's pencils being inked by Dick Ayers, George Roussos, Sal Brodsky, Frank Giacoia, Vince Colletta, Joe Sinnott, Chic Stone, Al Milgrom (substituting for Steve Ditko), and Pablo Marcos (who has inked ***FF***, but not while Kirby was pencilling the series).

NMP EDITORIAL SHAKE-UP

New Media Publishing, Inc., has undergone yet another editorial shake-up. As of June 1st, Peter Gillis will leave his post as editorial director of the gestating NMP line of Graphic Magazines, and return to free-lancing. His place will be taken by Richard Howell, the production manager of NMP.

Gillis' change of status was an amicable agreement between him and NMP publisher Hal Schuster regarding their differing attitudes towards magazine production. Gillis and Schuster agreed that Gillis was not the right choice for producing several series of quarterly magazines, and that his real skills lay in the field of writing. Gillis will be submitting scripts to Marvel Comics once again, as well as to Eclipse. He will also continue to collaborate with George Freeman (of ***CAPTAIN CANUCK*** fame) on a forthcoming fantasy series for NMP's upcoming ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** title. Current plans call for Gillis to also be responsible for the contents and final packaging of ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED #1***, which should include Doug Moench's and Bill Sienkiewicz's ***"Magenta Core,"*** Peter Gillis' and Alan Weiss' ***"Ransom,"*** and John Warner's and Tom Sutton's ***"Matrix."*** The ***"Ransom"*** strip is being voluntarily suspended by Gillis due to Weiss' other commitments and resultant inability to guarantee delivery of his NMP work on time, and Gillis' wish to only continue the strip if its artist can capture the exact feel of the material.

NMP's current line-up includes ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED, FANTASY ILLUSTRATED,*** and the already-in-production ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED*** and ***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED.*** The latter two are being delayed by several months to better accomodate the launching of the two "flagship" titles.

NEW MEDIA EXPANDS

HEROINES, ROMANCE TITLES ADDED

New Media Publishing, Inc., announced the expansion of its line of graphic magazines via the addition of two new "illustrated" productions. The first of the magazines will feature women adventurers and is presently named ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED***, although that title could be changed before press time. ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED*** will feature work by some of the finest craftsmen (and women) in comics, and has already attracted a lot of enthusiasm for its concept. The other magazine is ***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED***, which will reintroduce the genre of romance comics to the present audience. These two magazines will join NMP's other scheduled titles, ***ADVENTURE ILLUSTRATED*** and ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED***. It is planned for ***HEROINES*** to be published quarterly, but ***ROMANCE*** might begin at a three-times per year schedule.

HEROINES and ***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED*** differ from their sister titles in several important aspects. First, the new titles are the creation of Richard Howell and Carol Kalish, editors of ***COMICS FEATURE***. Richard Howell will edit the new titles. Secondly, both of the new magazines—particularly ***RI***—are aimed at a more specialized clientele than either ***FI*** or ***AI***, and will probably appear in more general-interest outlets to attract the already-established audience for their subject matters to comics. Third, the beginnings of ***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED*** date back some four years—before Howell and Kalish began working for New Media.

Kalish explains: "Desperado-Eastern [the limited publishing enterprise owned by Howell, which publishes ***PORTIA PRINZ OF THE GLAMAZONS***] had a projected romance comic in the works for longer than I like to think about. Both Richard and I are acutely aware of a large vacuum in that respect in the comics industry, and the relative success of ***PORTIA PRINZ***—which contains many of the elements of classic romance comics—encouraged both of us. Richard and I wrote six stories, and he was drawing one of them while I was scouting around for more artists, writers, and a distributor. Then the NMP option appeared..."

The "NMP option" refers to the eventful meeting last August during which Howell, Kalish, and Gillis met with Hal and Jack Schuster and a line of NMP magazines was created to join the already-extant ***COMICS FEATURE***. Although most of the magazines conceptualized at that meeting sprang fullblown from the brow of publisher Hal Schuster, some, like Kalish's already-in-production ***ART-FORM***, were grafted onto the growing NMP line.

"Part of what we were hired to do was to create new magazines," explains Kalish, "so our plans for ***ARTFORM*** and the romance comic dovetailed beautifully with that. Hal wanted us to hold off on the romance magazine, though, until the timing was right. He called us up last week [April 17] and wanted to know how soon we could get ***RI*** out, so I guess the timing is right now."

Already, several top-name professionals have expressed strong interest in working on ***RI***, confirming the rumors of real professional enthusiasm for the genre's return. "It could be that the market has become so predominantly super-hero comics-oriented that any variety is welcome," ventures ***RI*** co-editor Richard Howell, "or maybe romance comics themselves are missed, by both the writers and the artists. After all, the only comics artist I ever met who didn't think he drew the best women in the business was Marie Severin."

The scope of the stories may come as a surprise to comics readers not familiar with the history of the romance comics genre. "***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED*** was born out of our admiration for the ground-breaking Simon & Kirby romance comics, ***YOUNG LOVE*** and ***YOUNG ROMANCE***," explains Howell, "and if they had any one consistent editorial motif to them, it was that romance made good drama—that if your story has characters that are shaped or changed by their romantic connections, then it's a romance story. We're not ruling out adventure or humor or social commentary-style romance stories. We'd like to reintroduce the modern audience to just how affecting and powerful a love comic can be."

Due to the specialized demands of the romance comics genre, Howell and Kalish are choosing their contributors with great care. "We're aiming our stories to appeal not only to the largely-untapped female market for comics, but also to the already-established male audience," explains Kalish. "That means we want creators who can create visually exciting, dynamic stories, yet who can incorporate the subtlety and nuance which mainstream comics generally lack. We've been able to interest some exemplary craftsmen so far—some who will be 'returning' to comics to work on ***RI***—and we're very, very excited about the project. We have high hopes for ***ROMANCE ILLUSTRATED***."

Shortly thereafter, publisher Hal Schuster proposed the idea of a more conventially super-heroic title to accompany the new romance series, featuring female protagonists. Howell and Kalish agreed to take that assignment on, as well, and ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED*** was born. "I'm glad that Hal suggested this project," explains Kalish, "because I think there's a shocking lack of female heroes who are both believably female and recognizably heroic. In the place of the shrinking-violet maternal image super-heroine of yesteryear, we now have a sole new variety of heroine who has been endowed with all of the negative aspects of the male heroic stereotype. We want to exhibit some diversity in our characters." Current plans call for four new heroines to be recognizably female and inarguably heroic in four different series per issue: a western, a detective series, a space opera, and one other, as yet undetermined genre. Asked if there were any examples of the type of positive women characters which ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED*** would endeavor to feature, co-editor Howell remarked, "Well, not in today's comics. We'd like to present heroic women characters as multi-faceted and satisfying as, say, Wonder Woman during her Mike Sekowsky period (#183-96), or Rita (Elasti-Girl) Farr of The Doom Patrol. A character being as flashy and admirable as Big Barda (Mrs. Miracle) wouldn't hurt, either."

Current plans for ***HEROINES ILLUSTRATED*** include the western series to be written and drawn by Mark Evanier and Dan Spiegle.

Sekowsky's WW:"...multi-faceted and satisfying."

MARVEL FOLLOWS DC, RAISES PRICE TO 60¢

Marvel Comics Group has just announced that the company will follow in the steps of DC Comics and raise the price on its regular four-color comics from 50¢ to 60¢ each. The price hike will take effect with those comics shipped in September. Marvel's price hike will also affect its two black-and-white magazines, ***BIZARRE ADVENTURES*** and ***SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN***. The magazines will retail for $1.50 instead of their current $1.25. Further Marvel's special anniversary issues and annuals will go from 75¢ to $1.00. Only ***EPIC*** and ***CRAZY*** magazines seem to have been spared from the general company-wide increases. ***EPIC***, however, might face a price increase sometime soon, while ***CRAZY*** raised its price during the last two months.

According to Mike Freidrich, Marvel's manager of direct sales, the possibility of these price increases had been under serious discussion for several months. The decision to join DC in publishing 60¢ comics actually was reached in early July during a meeting which included Jim Shooter, Michael Hobson, and Ed Shukin. Friedrich was unable to pinpoint the exact reason why Marvel chose to institute the price hike at this time, although he did point out that the company has experienced dramatic increases in editorial art costs over the last two months as well as a large increase in printing costs. Friedrich pointed out that since Marvel's costs kept going up, it really should have been expected that their prices were rise accordingly.

There will be some packaging changes in the regular comics to soften the blow of the 20% price increase. All comics that formerly retailed for 50¢ would add two new pages of editorial material. Specifically these new pages will consist of one additional page of story (bringing the package's total up to 22 pages of original story and art) and one guaranteed Bullpen Bulletin page, an item that has been irregularly appearing in Marvel's comics for the last several months. This means that your typical 60¢ Marvel comic will contain 22 story pages, 1 Bullpen page, and 1 letters page.

The newly announced direct-market only books, which include ***KA-ZAR***, ***THE MICRONAUTS***, and ***MOON KNIGHT***, will remain at 75¢. They will continue to feature 28 pages of story, 2 pages of either letters or Bullpen Bulletin/letters, 2 house ads, and outside paid advertising on the inside front cover, the inside back cover, and the back cover.

Marvel's increases correspond to DC's similar move which took effect with this month's November cover-dated comics. It is the latest in a ever-faster spiral of increasing prices. However, this trend is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of comics publishing. Comics were almost universally 10¢ up until late 1961. At that time, the floodgates broke open and almost every comics publisher institute price hikes which raised cover prices to the back-breaking amount of 12¢. Only Dell Comics raised their prices beyond the 12¢ norm. Late 1961 Dell Comics retailed for 15¢. However, by early 1962, Dell reduced their price to 12¢ and that price became the industry standard for seven-and-a-half years.

This first major price increase by comics publishers followed a long period during which publishers fought rising costs not by raising prices but by reducing their books' page count. During the 1940s 10¢ comics contained at least 64 pages of material, some of it reprints of newspaper strips but much of it new story material. By the end of 1961 and the time of the first industry price hike, 10¢ comics had shrunk to only 32 pages, of which approximately 25 pages were actually new story material. So even though the price remained unchanged during that time, comics as an entertainment package in 1960 cost 100% more in terms of story page than corresponding packages during the 1940s.

In late 1969, inflation once again demanded an industry-wide price hike. Again the increase was modest: from 12¢ to 15¢. Many fans complained that at such prices they would have to sharply reduce their buying. Even more insidious than the up-front price hike was the companies decision to experiment with fewer story pages. Both Marvel and DC began to fluctuate their page count somewhat, running half-page ads in order to disguise the fact that the overall story page count was being eaten into slowly but surely.

Two years later, another hike took effect. Comics now cost 25¢—a dramatic increase. Both Marvel and DC attempted to soften the blow by increasing the page count for the first time since price inflation became an established part of comics collecting. Both companies attempted to sell their readers on a new format which included an additional eight pages of editorial material. In almost all cases these new pages actually contained reprints, but both Marvel and DC drew upon their impressive inventory of classic Golden Age material to fill the new pages.

Marvel's experiment with the reprint pages ended abruptly a month after the format was introduced. It returned to a 32 page package which retailed for 20¢. DC, however, found that many wholesalers and retailers appreciated the extra profit accruing from the higher priced books—which inspired a company tendency to experiment with larger and more expensive packages which continues to today.

Other comics companies such as Gold Key and Archie Comics followed the pricing habits of the big two. It generally became expected that a few months after DC and Marvel raised their price, the smaller companies would follow suit.

DC continued to publish the enlarged package for eleven months. Then, in July of 1972, the company followed Marvel and began producing a 32-page, 20¢ package. During this time the companies were still attempting to print more than 20 pages of story matter per issue; indeed, DC's norm was 24 pages of story and art, Marvel's generally a page or two less. In early 1973, however, in attempt to prevent yet another price increase, story pages were trimmed, first by a page down to roughly 23-24 pages, and then by another 3 to 19-20 pages.

The twenty-pages-for-twenty-cents deal lasted through the 1974-dated books. In January, 1975, the axe fell again and prices were increased to 25¢. A little over a year later, in April of 1976, another nickel was added to the retail price and original story page count stabilized downward to 17 pages.

In Febuary of 1977, DC experimented with a new package: a 48-page package which contained 35 pages of story and retailed for 50¢. Although only one title, ***JUSTICE LEAGUE***, was affected during the experiment, the package received positive feedback from wholesalers and retailers. DC experimented with yet another high-priced package just two months later when its line of Dollar Comics debuted. They initially contained 80 pages, 66 of which were all-new story and art.

The Summer of 1977 saw yet another round of price increases

(continued on page 28)

BATES AND HEATH PREMIERE LONE RANGER

NY TIMES SYNDICATE REVIVES CLASSIC COMIC STRIP

Cary Bates and Russ Heath, two names long familiar to readers of comic books, will be writing and drawing, respectively, the New York Times Syndicate's new ***LONE RANGER*** comic strip. The strip will begin on Sunday, September 13, 1981, and will feature an interlocking daily and Sunday continuity. The first adventure will involve a woman from The Lone Ranger's past. Any resemblances between the new ***LONE RANGER*** comic strip and ***THE LEGEND OF THE LONE RANGER*** movie would seem to be superficial. The Lone Ranger, for instance, combs his hair like Klinton Spilsbury rather than like Clayton Moore.

A KIDNAPPED BOY HAS BEEN RESCUED AND RETURNED TO HIS GRATEFUL FATHER
HOW DO YOU FIGURE MEN LIKE THEM? THEY SAVE MY BOY'S LIFE, THEN REFUSE MY OFFER OF GRATITUDE!
IT WASN'T YOUR GRATITUDE THEY REFUSED, PA!
IT WAS YOUR MONEY THEY DIDN'T WANT!

I KNOW THAT INDIAN SIDEKICK IS AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE - BUT WE AND MY WINCHESTER ARE READY FOR HIM!
THE OUTLAW HEARS HOOFBEATS
"UH-OH! IT IS TOO LATE!
YIIIEE!!

Heath had been discussed as the original choice as artist for ***THE LONE RANGER*** strip, but could not accept the assignment due to his other commitments at that time (including drawing the adaptation of ***"Condorman"*** for ***WALT DISNEY'S TREASURY OF CLASSIC TALES*** newspaper strip. Heath later became available again, and NY Times Special Features signed him. The press package for ***THE LONE RANGER*** also mentioned Heath's involvement with ***AMERICAN POP***.

NOW THAT WE EMPTIED THE CARTRIDGE, MAYA WE'LL HAVE YOUR BAG AND BE ON OUR WAY!
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF PARTING WITH IT--AND IF CERTAINLY NOT UNLESS I TO HAND IT OVER TO YOU!
P. 9
"THEN I'LL JUST INCLINE YOU WITH A--
TANG!

P-33
YOU MEAN TO TAKE UP WHERE THOSE OTHER TWO LEFT OFF, STRANGER?
EASY, DRIVER--MY COMPANION AND I ARE HERE TO HELP!
WE'VE BEEN ON THE TRACK OF ONE OF THOSE OUTLAWS FOR THREE DAYS.
AND WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE ANYTHING SAID BY A MAN WHO HIDES BEHIND A MASK?
GREAT THUNDER! IT CAN'T BE HER!

Special Features also mentioned Heath's involvement with ***AMERICAN POP***.

Bates, along with his regular DC comics assignments, such as ***SUPERMAN, SUPERBOY***, AND ***THE FLASH***, also scripts the ***BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY*** comic strip for NY Times Special Features. That strip is drawn by Gray Morrow.

MARVEL TO PRODUCE SPIDER-MAN SERIES

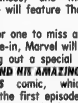
Los Angeles-based Marvel Productions has sold a new half-hour animated series to NBC. The show, entitled ***SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS***, is a distillation of many elements, some already familiar to Marvel readers.

The new series will find Peter Parker living at home with Aunt May and her two boarders, Bobby Drake (a.k.a. Iceman) and Angelica Jones, a new super-heroine who will go by the name of either Heat Wave or Firefly. The three young heroes will all attend E.S.U., and, when not busy with classes, will team up to fight the likes of Doctor Doom and The Vulture.

"We're trying for a certain ambience with the characters," said story editor Dennis Marks, "Not unlike Butch Cassidy, The Sundance Kid, and Etta Place. There will be lots of Marvel-style action, as well as a little romance between Peter and Angelica. In addition, Angelica has a little dog named Ms. Lion—a terrific new character that we think will steal the show."

The new series will also feature guest stars. The Hulk, Captain America, and The Sub-Mariner are all slated for guest appearances, and the first episode will feature The Green Goblin.

Never one to miss a chance for a tie-in, Marvel will also be bringing out a special ***SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS*** comic, which will depict the first episode of the TV series in comics form.



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MARVEL SPECIAL PROJECTS

Bill Mantlo is working on an album-sized story plot involving The Avengers, the returns of Kang and Mantis, and the fates of Ultron and Jocasta. Exactly where and when the story will see print is uncertain at this point, but the Marvel fan-shop album series seems the likeliest prospect.

OBNOXIO THE CLOWN, written and drawn by Alan Kupperberg, will appear as a one-shot four-color newsstand comic. Obnoxio has previously appeared in Marvel's ***CRAZY*** magazine, but never before in the comics line. Not scheduled as yet, the book should see release by fall.

Marvel will definitely be doing an adaptation of the forthcoming ***ANNIE*** movie, and will also do an ***ANNIE*** comic book series to be distributed in Europe and possibly in the United States as well. The movie adaptation will probably be released in the spring of 1982, and, on the request of the ***ANNIE*** film's representatives, will be drawn in the style of the comic strip. (Marvel's original intention was to draw it in the company's own art style.) Jim Shooter says that his first choice for the person to do the adaptation is Leonard Starr, the strip's present writer/artist, but he has not as yet approached Starr on the subject.

Marvel will also definitely do an adaptation of the ***CONAN*** movie for the spring of 1982 and one of ***ROCKY III*** for December of 1981. The company will probably also do adaptations of the first two ***ROCKY*** movies also for December 1981 release. Dave Gibbons, who drew the ***DR. WHO*** stories in ***MARVEL PREMIERE***, will draw Marvel's adaptation of the forthcoming live action film ***THE TIME BANDITS***, which is directed by Monty Python's animator Terry Gilliam. Except for ***THE TIME BANDITS***, Marvel intends to release each adaptation in as many formats as possible: Super Special, paperback, and, if a direct buyer can be found, Treasury edition.

Marvel's first issue of ***DENNIS THE MENACE*** will appear in July. It will be written by longtime ***"Dennis"*** scripter Fred Toole, with art by the studio of ***"Dennis"*** creator Hank Ketcham. There will be twelve issues per year of new material, and six issues per year, in an as yet undetermined format, of reprint material.

Jim Shooter says that despite Marvel's interest in ***DENNIS*** and ***ANNIE***, the company has no intention of licensing other comic strip characters. Shooter states that Marvel would not be doing ***ANNIE*** if not for the forthcoming movie, and that one of Marvel's reasons for picking up the rights to do ***DENNIS*** is because Marvel sees it as as good property for its film production studio. There are, however, no plans to do a ***DENNIS*** film or TV show at this time.

AVENGERS UPSETS

In an attempt to get ***THE AVENGERS*** on schedule, Jim Shooter has been writing two and three parters, each to be illustrated by a different artist. Alan Weiss is drawing a two issue story featuring Tigra and the Silver Surfer, along with whoever the Avengers are by then, and Alan Kupperberg will be drawing a two or three parter to follow that. There has been no regular penciller announced as yet.

Henry (Ant-Man, Giant-Man, Goliath and Yellowjacket) Pym is in for quite an ordeal in upcoming issues of ***THE AVENGERS***. He has yet another collapse, followed by his court-martial, divorce from Janet (The Wasp) Van Dyne Pym, his wife since ***AVENGERS #60***, and finally he becomes a super-villain(!) in league with his old nemesis Egghead.

THOMAS/COLAN PREMIERE WONDER WOMAN'S NEW LOOK

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The hotly-debated new Wonder Woman uniform will be bestowed on the Amazon Princess in her first adventure written and drawn by her new creative team: Roy Thomas and Gene Colan. The costume, which features a stylized double-W in place of the golden-eagle-brassiere design, will apparently be awarded to Wonder Woman as a kind of battle trophy or promotion. WW will face and defeat Hercules, the Amazons' enemy, and will receive her new look as a token of distinguished service to her people.

This story will appear as an insert in DC ***COMICS PRESENTS #41***. Wonder Woman's new look, both in creators and in costume, will then be transferred over to her own magazine, beginning with #288. Romeo Tanghal will be inking Colan's pencil work on ***WONDER WOMAN***. Len Wein remains editor.

Wonder Woman will be gaining additional exposure through a cross-over appearance in her series by The New Teen Titans, DC's hottest-selling "fan shop" series. This will take place in ***WONDER WOMAN #287***, an interim issue between the old creative teams and the new. The story will return Wonder Woman's nemesis Doctor Cyber, and the script will be by regular ***TT*** scribe Marv Wolfman.

The art on the ***"WW/TT"*** story has been done by Don Heck, intermittant penciller on the ***WONDER WOMAN*** series in past years, and now artist on ***"Aquaman"*** and ***"Dial 'H' for Hero."*** According to Wolfman, Heck's work on this story is "the best work he's done since the old ***IRON MAN*** days."

Wolfman states that, on the basis of that story, if George Perez ever has to miss an issue of ***THE NEW TEEN TITANS***, "Don is my first choice for a fill-in."

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SPIDER-MAN NEWS

Roger Stern takes over writing ***AMAZING SPIDER-MAN*** with issue #224. Bill Mantlo will be the new writer of ***PETER PARKER, THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN***.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #15, written by Denny O'Neil with art by Frank Miller and Klaus Janson, guest stars the Punisher and Dr. Octopus.

Dr. Strange and Spider-Man go back in time to meet King Kull in ***MARVEL TEAM-UP #112***.

In August Marvel will release an adaptation of the first episode of a new and as yet unnamed ***"Spider-Man"*** cartoon series for television. Edited by Tom DeFalco, the adaptation will be written by Jim Salicrup and pencilled by Don Spiegle (no inker announced as yet), and feature four or five pages of text by Stan Lee explaining the evolution of the new series and reasons for the differences between it and regular Marvel continuity.

J. Marc DeMatteis and Herb Trimpe are the regular writer and artist on ***MARVEL TEAM-UP***.

The Molten Man returns in ***AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #224***, while The Goldbug from ***POWER MAN*** and ***HULK*** battles ***THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN*** in issue #62. Both stories are writen by Bill Mantlo.

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Forthcoming is a feature ***"Exactly How Strong Is Spider-Man?"*** which will rank all of the Marvel super-heroes according to strength.

BUCKLER OFF ALL-STAR

Rich Buckler has left ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON***, after having completed five issues and the preview insert. His replacement has not yet been chosen, but Adrian Gonzales was mentioned as a possibility. Due to the differences in scheduling covers and interiors with the printers, Buckler's covers will continue on ***ALL-STAR SQUADRON*** until issue #7.

TITANS/ X-MEN TEAM UP

Early reports indicate that the next Marvel/DC team-up tabloid, featuring fan-faves ***THE TEEN TITANS*** and the current cast of ***THE X-MEN*** magazine, will feature as antagonists Darkseid and Dark Phoenix. The former is the mega-villain from Jack Kirby's ***NEW GODS*** series of a decade ago, and the latter is quite dead.

GRELL TAKES LEAVE OF WARLORD

CREATES THE STAR SLAYER FOR PACIFIC COMICS

Mike Grell will develop a short-run series for Pacific Comics new line of four-color alternative series. According to Pacific Comics spokesmen, Grell will both write and pencil a new sword-and-sorcery title ***STAR-SLAYER***. The new series will focus on the adventures of a young Celtic barbarian, who is thrown into the future.

Torin MacQuillon is transported into some indeterminate future era by a woman named Tamara, who is convinced that Torin can end the ecological bottleneck with which the Earth of that period is currently afflicted. The sun has gone nova, and the only reason that the Earth's atmosphere has not dissipated is the "greenhouse effect," which is keeping the air around the planet. With Earth still habitable, the genetically-altered inhabitants of the other planets in the solar system are all converging upon the planet to save it for their own races. It becomes the "Star-Slayer" 's mission to protect Earth. He is outfitted with an unstable-atom sword, a pistol which fires different types of projectiles and rays, and a symbiotic android mobile computer in the shape of a monkey. The computer-monkey has studied ancient languages to more easily be able to communicate with the barbarian from the past—unfortunately, the little creature has mainly studied old Humphrey Bogart movies, thus giving his and Torin's conversations a tone somewhat incongruous with the seriousness of their joint mission.

The ancient peoples of Earth, Tamara tells Torin, had a power source which could spell salvation. The key to finding the source is a medallion which was separated into various pieces and disseminated among the various colonies of Earth, and it becomes Torin's duty to collect the pieces of the medallion and, ultimately, solve Earth's many problems.

In order to work on the new Pacific title, Grell has requested a six month leave of absence from DC. His departure means that ***WARLORD*** will, for the first time since the series' inception, be pencilled by someone other than its creator. Grell will continue to script the series, however, and will also be pencilling the covers.

Mark Texiera will replace Grell as the series' penciller, while Mike DeCarlo will ink. The new team will take over with issue #52 and plan to adhere to Grell's distinctive style and story approach. #51 will contain a reprint of the series' first issue.

STARSLAYER, like Jack Kirby's ***CAPTAIN VICTORY*** series (also for Pacific Comics), is scheduled to run for six issues, and then be collected into an album format. The comics themselves will only be distributed through comics shops.

In all probability, both ***STAR-SLAYER*** and ***CAPTAIN VICTORY*** will cost $1.00 per issue and appear in alternating months over the course of the year. According to David Scroggy of Pacific Comics, they are aiming for a June or July release date.

MARVEL CONSIDERS GENRE COMICS

Marvel plans a revival (at least for them) of the western and romance comics genres. These comics will not be the same format as newsstand comics. As described by Jim Shooter, they will be "the size of TV Guide, and in color, if I have anything to say about it." The books will be marketed in supermarkets and other stores where romance and western novels do well.

Neither series is titled as yet, and material may well be bought from non-Marvel screipters. "We may end up bringing in outside writers who are familiar with those fields and then adapt their stuff for comics," says Shooter. The first western title may be drawn by Gil Kane, and Shooter also hopes that John Buscema will pencil the first romance title, but no contracts have been signed as yet. The books will be ungoverned by the Comics Code. It seems Tom DeFalco may well edit one, it not both ot the series. No release date has been set, as these titles are only in the planning stages as yet, and won't be appearing for quite a while.

DISNEY SHOW IN NEW YORK

From June 24 through September 6, the Whitney Museum in New York is hosting a Disney exhibit, including a display of Disney drawings, animation cels, and other artwork, and screenings of many Disney cartoon shorts, including some rare cartoons. Available in the museum shop will be a catalogue on Disney animation by Greg Ford, their guest lecturer.

DC DIGEST UPDATE

DC's digest line-up, in the near future, will consist of the following:

BEST OF DC: #18: Teen Titans, edited by Len Wein, #19: Superman, edited by Julie Schwartz, #20: World's Finest, edited by Mike Barr, #21: Justice Society of America, edited by Wein, and #22: Super-Hero Christmas, edited by Schwartz.

DC SPECIAL will feature, in #15: Secret Origins of Super-Villains, edited by E. Nelson Bridwell, #16: Green Lantern, edited by Laurie Sutton, #17: Ghosts, edited by Andy Helfer, #18: Sgt. Rock, edited by Mike Barr, and #19: New Gods, edited by Karen Berger.

MARVEL

***AMAZING SPIDER-MAN* #222** has a cover pencilled and inked by Walt Simonson. The Black Cat will soon return in that book as will the X-Men's foe, The Juggernaut, both in stories by Roger Stern.

The ***"Star-Lord"*** story from ***MARVEL PREVIEW #11***, which was the first collaboration of Chris Claremont, John Byrne, and Terry Austin, will be republished, this time in color, in a special sixty-four page magazine. There will be no ads and the magazine will be sold only through direct sales outlets. Available in October, the magazine will sell for $1.50 a copy.

WHAT IF #31 presents ***"What if Wolverine Killed The Hulk?"*** written by Rich Margopolis and drawn by Bob Budiansky, and ***"What if The Fantastic Four Had Never Been?"*** by Bill Mantlo and Alan Kupperberg.

STAR WARS #53 has a story that was originally a ***"John Carter of Mars"*** story which was revamped for British publication. ***"Lost Gift From Alderaan,"*** is written by Chris Claremont, pencilled by Carmine Infantino, and inked by Alan Kupperberg.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #69 features ***"The Eye of the Sorcerer"*** by Roy Thomas, Ernie Chan, and Alfredo Alcala; ***"The Lost Race"*** by Thomas, Gene Day, and Danny Bulanadi, a cover by Joe Jusko, and a feature with pictures on the making of the ***CONAN*** movie.

FANTASTIC FOUR #236, the twentieth anniversary issue, will be sixty-four pages long and sell for one dollar.

Ed Hannigan has created a concept for a new comic series, ***TEAM AMERICA***, which involves motorcycles and other vehicles, and which Marvel will be publishing sometime in the future. The series is based on a toy.

HIS ENTRANCE TOOK MY BREATH AWAY! IN A LITTLE OVER A MONTH THE DESERT HAS BECOME...
LEIA ?
GREETINGS, WARLORD. BLESSED BE YOUR HOUSE AND ALL WHO BEAR YOUR NAME!
...WHO HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A BEAUTY WHOSE GRACE AND MAJESTY RIVALED THAT OF MY INCOMPARABLE WIFE.
HAN CALIAN WAS FLAWLESS WITH A SLIGHT, DELIGHTFUL EDGE. HE HAD TAKEN MY SUDDEN, DANGEROUS THOUGHTS FROM MY MIND, AND SOUGHT TO SEPARATE, REFUSE IN DIPLOMATIC CHIT-CHAT.
LEIA--I NOW BELIEVE YOU ARE INDEED A PRINCESS. BOWS.

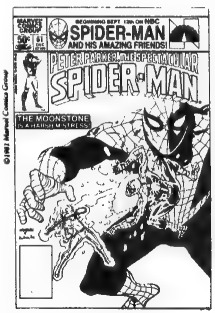
The final issue of ***SHE-HULK*** (number 25), will be double-sized.

The last issue of ***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES*** is #105.

There will be a one-shot ***OBNOXIO THE CLOWN*** color comic with script and art by Alan Kupperberg, in which the character from ***CRAZY*** battles The X-Men.

POWER MAN/IRON FIST #76 features in addition to a story by its regular writer Mary Jo Duffy, an additional tale by Chris Claremont, Mike W. Barr, Rudy Nebres and Ricardo Villamonte.

The secret behind The Human Torch's sometime girlfriend Frankie Raye is revealed in ***FANTASTIC FOUR #238***.


BECOMING SEPT. 13th ON NBC!
SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS!
PETER PARKER'S LIFE AS AN ARACHNID IS SPIDER-MAN
THE MOONSTONE
THE ASSISTANT MYSTERIES
©1983 Marvel Comics Group

WIN A Columbia TEN-SPEED FORMULA 10 RACER!
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
THE DAY THE MUTANTS DIED! THE X-MEN IS THE DAY THE X-MEN FALL!
©1983 Marvel Comics Group

Subjects •••• Short Subjects •••• Short Subjects

The same month that Galactus pits The Dazzler against his current herald Terrax in ***DAZZLER #11***, he will also attack Rom's homeworld Galador in ***ROM #26***.

J.M. DeMatteis is the new regular writer on ***MARVEL TEAM-UP***. Future issues will team Spider-Man with Paladin and The Dazzler, Devil-Slayer and The Defenders, Quasar, and King Kull.

Marvel now intends to begin releasing its graphic novel series in the fall beginning with Starlin's ***"Death of Captain Marvel"*** book. The novel series has been delayed while work was being done on the contracts for the writers and artists. Shooter says that the contracts are now in their "fourth incarnation" and he hopes this will be satisfactory.

In a forthcoming issue of ***DOCTOR STRANGE***, Strange will travel to ancient Egypt at the very time of the Fantastic Four's battle with Pharoah Rama-Tut. Sgt. Fury and the Howling Commandos show up in #50.

A two-part story involving Daredevil, Power Man, and Iron Fist will begin in ***DAREDEVIL #178*** and conclude the same month in ***POWER MAN/IRON FIST #77***. The premise is that Foggy Nelson hires Power Man and Iron Fist to act as Matt Murdock's bodyguards. The ***"Daredevil"*** half, which introduces The Archangel and also involves The Kingpin and Elektra, will be written by Frank Miller and have art by Miller and Janson, while the ***"Power/Fist"*** portion will be by Mary Jo Duffy, Kerry Gammill and Ricardo Villamonte.

The ***MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SUMMER OLYMPICS TREASURY*** by Bill Mantlo, John Romita, Jr. and Pablo Marcos is now intended to be released in some format, perhaps as a mini-series, in the summer of 1982.

Marvel has decided not to do a regular comic series based on the film ***RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK***.

Marvel is planning to promote much of its material through advertisements in fanzines.

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DC

DC confirmed rumors that the company plans to release a new "funny animal" title in the near future. Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway have created a group of funny animal characters which will star in their as yet untitled comics series. Dick Giordano will edit the new comic.

According to Roy Thomas the new series has been under consideration for some time. A long-time admirer of the funny animal genre, Thomas, who had worked on a few proposed funny animal ideas for Marvel, was eager to work within the genre at DC. Several different approaches have been investigated, including animal spoofs of The Justice League of America. According to Thomas and Giordano, though, the JLA take-off is definitely not the approach that the company finally decided upon. Other than that emphatic denial, DC is reluctant to say anything more about the new series at this time.

The new series will debut as a 16 page special insert. Current plans call for this first appearance to be part of ***TEEN TITANS #16***, on sale in May of 1982. The first issue of the new series will appear the following month. Current plans call for it to appear monthly.

Gene Colan has been assigned the pencilling chores on ***THE PHANTOM ZONE*** mini-series. The series will be written by Steve Gerber, and edited by Dick Giordano.

Pat Broderick has pencilled the ***"Firestorm"*** story for ***FLASH #303***. Current plans call for him to pencil the subsequent installment, also.

E. Nelson Bridwell and Bob Rozakis have each written fill-in issues of ***SUPERBOY***.

Paul Levitz returns as scripter of ***THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** with #284.

The theatrical motion picture ***SWAMP THING*** went into production the end of April. Filming is currently under way in South Carolina. The film will be distributed by United Artists in the U.S. while Avco-Embassy will handle foreign distribution.

MADAME XANADU, DC's experiment in direct sales (sold only through comic book speciality shops and the like) sold 96,000 copies. DC plans to continue in their direct-sales program.

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•• Short Subjects •••• Short Subjects •••• Short S

The Justice League will soon get amnesia and face DC's western heroes in a show-down. Their antagonists will be Jonah Hex, Cinnamon, Bat Lash, and Scalphunter.

Pat Broderick will be pencilling several issues of ***THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES***, and may become "permanent" penciller on that series. George Perez has designed new costumes for several members of the Legion, including the long-delayed Cosmic Boy cover-up outfit. Shadow Lass, Princess Projectra, and Timber Wolf will be among those to benefit from Perez's attentions. Timber Wolf will soon revert back to his less bestial, more humanoid appearance as well.

BRAVE & Bold #181 will guest star The Hawk and The Dove, and will be written by Alan Brennert. The art will be by Jim Aparo.

The first installment of the new ***"Zatanna"*** series in ***WORLD'S FINEST*** (which will begin with issue #274), will establish that Zatanna still wears her top-hat and mesh stockings outfit during her stage act—and that her selection of super-suits come into play only when she is free-lance super-heroing. Zatanna's manager/boyfriend is also re-introduced. With the series' second installment, Dan Spiegle assumes the art chores.

Keith Giffen will be drawing the ***"Doctor Fate"*** series beginning in the back of ***FLASH #306***. Editor Mike Barr has paved the way for the character's re-introduction by including the mystic mage in ***FLASH #305***'s double-Flash team-up, and by including the Dr. Fate/Superman team-up (from ***WORLD'S FINEST***) in the upcoming "Superman with Super Guest-Stars" digest.

Laurie Sutton will become the editor of ***WARLORD*** with #52. She will replace Ross Andru, who will be devoting his time to developing several new titles for the company. ***WARLORD*** is Sutton's first regular editorial assignment.

Joe Kubert won the Reuben Award in the catagory of best comic book story for ***SGT. ROCK***. The Reuben Awards are presented by the National Cartoonist Society.

Firestorm will no longer be featured in the back-up series in ***FLASH***. Beginning with issue #306, a new back-up series will start featuring the modern adventures of Doctor Fate. The new series will be written by Marty Pasko. No artist has been selected yet, but editor Mike Barr indicated that Keith Giffin and Trevor Von Eeden are likely canditates for the job.

Bruce Jones has taken over the writing of ***"I, Vampire,"*** currently appearing in ***HOUSE OF MYSTERY***.

The ***ADAM STRANGE*** back-up in ***GREEN LANTERN*** will draw to a close as of issue #146. Current plans call for its replacement to be a new ***TALES OF THE GREEN LANTERN CORP*** series. Paul Kupperberg is scheduled to script the new series. No art team has been selected as yet.

Joe Staton will ink several upcoming issues of ***SUPERMAN***.

Earth-Two fans will be happy to know that ***FLASH #305*** will feature a 27 page team-up of the Earth-One and Earth-Two Flashes. The two Flashes must work together to try and prevent Joan Garrick, wife of the Earth-Two Flash, from suffering a fate similar to that which overtook Iris Allen.

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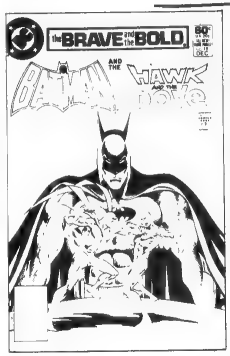

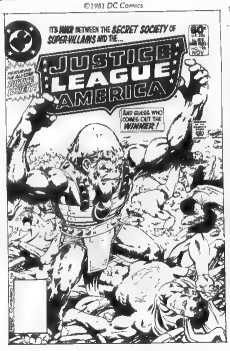
IT'S WAR BETWEEN THE SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS AND THE...
JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
AND GUESS WHO COMES OUT THE WINNER?

5 ALL NEW STORIES
SUPERGIRL • LOIS LANE • JIMMY OLSEN & MR. AND MRS. SUPERMAN IS CLARK KENT
THE SUPERMAN FAMILY
SUPERGIRL: BUT TO DIE WITHOUT HIS LOVE!
SUPERGIRL: BAT-TUS THE WRONG WAY, LAIRD!
GLACKNOCK!

GENERAL

Aardvark-Vanaheim Press intends to publish a strip zine entitled ***OUT OF THE DEPTHS***. The series should begin sometime in 1981 and is intended to showcase promising comics writers and artists and to act as a training ground for a new anthology title also planned by A-V. The enterprise is inviting submissions of five to eight pages in length (written, pencilled, inked, and lettered), preferably with twist endings, and in any genre except superheroes. They promise a minimal page rate for print-ready work, and will pay within 30 days of acceptance. Aardvark-Vanaheim advises submissions of xeroxes only, since they will not be returning submissions. All contributors will retain copyright to their work. Further details available from Aardvark-Vanaheim Press, P.O. Box 1674, Stn. "C," Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, N2G 4R2

ECLIPSE #1 has sold out its first printing.

Eclipse has also released ***THE MIKE MIST MINUTE MIST-ERIES*** by Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty. It is a collection of short whodunit pages originally done as part of a syndicated weekly "Comics Page." It is priced at $1.50.

A scene from "Ms. Tree" in *ECLIPSE #2*

©1981 Max Allan Collins & Terry Beatty

Donald Duck, a fowl of some renown, has recently been credited with an engineering feat which saved the ecological balance of a major harbor. In 1964, the freighter Al Kuwait capsized in the Kuwait harbor, taking with it its cargo (including 6000 live sheep). There was a danger that the rotting carcasses would poison the water supply.

According to ***PARADE*** magazine, Danish manufacturer Karl Kroyer then remembered a "1949 Walt Disney comic book" in which Donald Duck, his nephews, and their Uncle Scrooge, raised a sunken yacht by "stuffing it full of ping-pong balls."

Kroyer duplicated the Duck family's fictional feat (using 27 billion polystyrene balls, injuected into the hull of the Al Kuwait), and saved the supply of drinking water.

The real credit, of course, should go to Disney writer/artist Carl Barks, who scripted and drew that particular Duck story (probably an ***UNCLE SCROOGE***, and ***PARADE'S*** estimation of the comic's date could well be wrong) an inventive writer whose plots usually contained some educational basis. They were rarely, though, of quite so much practical value as in the instance of the Al Kuwait.

MARVEL PRICE RISE

(continued from page 20)

go into effect. 30¢ comics were increased to 35¢. Many readers hoped that this price would at least hold steady for enough time to catch their breath, but barely a year later, prices went up again.

Marvel chose to pursue a conservative route and merely raised its prices to 40¢ with no change in package. DC, on the other hand, decided to completely change its standard comics package, and raised its standard price to 50¢. The substantial increase was accompanied by a massive page expansion: story pages were increased from 17 pages to 25. During this period, now known as "The DC Explosion," DC also announced its plans for a generally expansion, including the publication of several new titles. Warner Communications, the owners of DC Comics, was appalled by DC's winter sales figues (which had been generated during a time known as the "Blizzard of '78," a period which saw most of the country literally buried by snow) and scuttled the plans for the company's expansion and insisted that the regular comics follow the Marvel format rather than the new experimental 50¢ package. Sales reports received several months later on the three months during which the experimental package was sold indicate that the new packaging was a complete success and was greeted enthusiastically by wholesalers and retailers, as well as by readers.

The 40¢ package remained the industry standard until the Summer of 1980. At that time, DC again experimented with new formats, raising its price to 50¢; at the same time its new story page count went up to 25 pages. Marvel initially resisted the idea of a price increase, but in an unexpected turn-around announced that it, too, would raise its prices to 50¢ effective the same time DC's price went up. Caught unprepared for the increase, Marvel was unable to match DC's additional page count. While five new editorial pages were added to the editorial package, bring the page count up to 22 pages, these extra pages initially were made up of pin-up pages and special extras.

DC's announcement early this year that it was going to a 60¢ package with the addition of 2 more story pages was again resisted by Marvel. Five months later, however, Marvel joins DC in publishing 60¢ packages. Given the recent history of comics prices there is no assurance that prices will not climb even further next year.

Mike Grell has taken over the art chores on the ***TARZAN*** newspaper strip. It is unclear if this will require him to extend his six-month leave from the pencilling of ***WARLORD***. Grell's initial sabbatical from his scripting and pencilling duties on his fifty-plus issue-old DC creation was caused by his involvement with Pacific Comics' ***STAR-SLAYER*** project (see report in this issue's news), but was not projected to last longer than that series' six-issue run.

Grell initially came to comic books in the first place from comic strips, having served as Dale Messick's assistant on ***BRENDA STARR***.

PORTIA PRINZ OF THE GLAMAZONS, Vol. II, No. 1, will be released this Summer following production setbacks. According to Editor/Writer/Artist Richard Howell, the upgrading of production values resulted in "more problems than first appeared." Among the changes between the original packaging and the upcoming product is a new, painted cover. This collection of adventures of the World's Greatest Pseudo-intellectual Super-Heroine will be 32 pages and cost $1.25.

Ken Pierce has released the second in his series of ***"Modesty Blaise"*** reprint books. The second contains ***"The Mind of Mrs. Drake"*** and ***"Uncle Happy."*** The book is square-bound and costs $5.95.

Richard and Wendy Pini's full-color reprint version of their popular ***ELFQUEST*** series will be colored by both Wendy Pini and Glynis Wein. The two women, each skilled colorists, will be dividing the labor by different issues, with Wein tentatively scheduled to color two of the five books included in the volume.

Dan Spiegle is drawing the revival of ***DOCTOR SOLAR—MAN OF THE ATOM***

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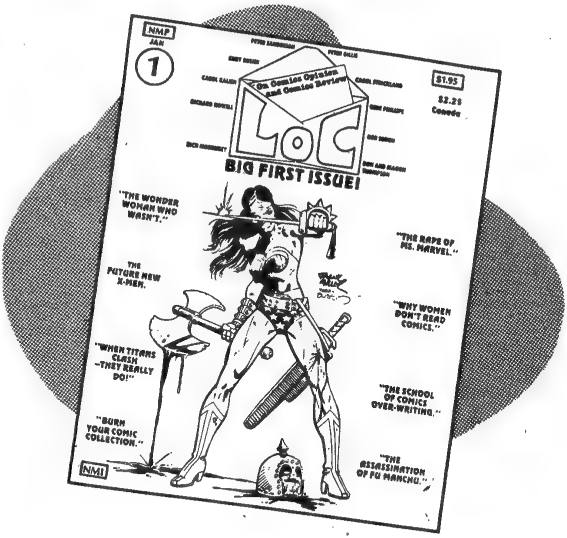

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ANIMATED CHATTER

SATURDAY MORNING SEASON

by Claude Banff

Several issues ago, I started out to critique the latest crop of Saturday morning cartoons that debuted on network television last September. The reason why this follow-up article now appears more than half a year later is that I kept pushing this review back, hoping to comment on all the new shows when they finally appeared. Sadly, this has proved not to be the case. Hanna-Barbera was so badly hurt by last year's actor's strike that they have shelved plans to show their new ***SPACE STARS*** series until fall '81. Filmation's new, revamped ***FLASH GORDON*** series has apparently run into some snags both with King Features and with Dino De Laurentis' live ***FLASH GORDON*** feature, so that has also been pulled pending further notice. This leaves NBC with only one brand-new entry in the Saturday morning market, the ninety-minute ***FLINTSTONES*** show. Comprised of many odd, diverse elements, the show is an incongruous mix of nearly every series Hanna-Barbera has done to date. There is a horror segment (***"The Frankenstones"***) a funny animal segment (***"Cave Mouse"***) a mystery/super-hero segment (***"Captain Caveman"***) and a few others which elude definition. By far and away, the best element of the show is the ***"Cave Mouse"*** feature, several episodes of which were directed by the late, great Tex Avery. The master animator's hand was clearly apparent in the segment I saw several weeks ago, which was highlighted by the Cave Mouse (a strange little creature that resembles a cut down version of Smilin' Ed dressed in a loincloth) making a raid on the Flintstone's refrigerator. The gags came fast and funny, and included such gems as Cave Mouse's neck stretching outrageously to eat an ear of corn typewriter style, and the little mouse's eyes turning purple as he sucked out the juice from a grape.

Unfortunately, the rest of the show is not as exciting, falling back on the old stand-bys of goofy monsters and goofier teen-agers to hold the tots' interest. Ironically, the wry humor that made the original ***FLINTSTONES*** such a hit when it first appeared in the early 1960s is probably considered too sophisticated by today's restrictive animation censors. This is unfortunate, because apart from ***"Cave Mouse,"*** this show is desperately in need of something better than the mildly funny reaction lines that are used instead of jokes.

Turning to ABC, we find the world's stupidest dog and the world's most obnoxious puppy, ***SCOOBY AND SCRAPPY DOO***. Just how long this giggling, moronic Great Dane is going to be allowed to blunder his way across the screen before being mercifully (for us viewers) put to sleep is anybody's guess. Yet, Scooby and his pals have been going strong for ten years now, and it's hard to argue in the face of success. Shucking the once popular half-hour mystery theme, Scooby and nephew Scrappy now have three short adventures per episode, wherein they meet monsters, witches, genies, and aliens. There is an unwritten-yet-stringently-obeyed law of television cartoon writing which states that every character must, during the run of his show, meet monsters, witches, genies, and aliens. Nobody seems to know why this is, and, judging from what's been coming over Saturday morning television lately, nobody cares.

Two more Hanna-Barbera offerings can be found on ABC this year. They are ***RICHIE RICH***, based on the popular Harvey comic series, and ***FONZ AND THE HAPPY DAYS GANG*** based on the well-known prime-time show, ***HAPPY DAYS***. Basing an animated show on an already popular live series is hardly a new idea. There was Filmation's ***STAR TREK*** series a few seasons back, and before that, cartoon shows utilizing the talents of famous singing groups were all the rage. (***THE BEATLES, THE JACKSON FIVE SHOW,*** etc.) In each case, something extra was added to the animated series to make the original concept more palatable to the kiddies. In most cases, this extra element was a pet of some sort, or some comedy character. Now comes ***FONZ AND THE HAPPY DAYS GANG***, and surprise! They've at last given us a show that is mostly extra elements, with the original concept thrown in as an afterthought. Instead of Milwaukee, 1957, the show's locale is a screwy time-machine plunging helplessly (but always non-threateningly) through time and space. Aboard the ship is a kooky magical gal from the future named Cupcake, and yet another of Hanna-Barbera's AKA rejects, Mr. Cool; a dog so stupid, he makes Goofy look like a Rhodes scholar. Also in the time-machine are Richie, Ralph and Fonzie (remember them?) from the ***HAPPY DAYS*** show, and each week finds them in another fantastic time and setting battling evil knights, dragons, monsters, witches, genies, and aliens. Zzzzzz.

The ***RICHIE RICH*** show I watched once—and under duress—for the purpose of writing this article. If there is a more repulsive concept for a television show (or for a comic book) than that of a kid with a $100,000.00 weekly allowance, then I don't know what it is. At least Scrooge earned his billions. ***RICHIE RICH*** symbolizes capitalism gone berserk. I am loathe to endorse any political doctrines in this column, but I believe any kid who stops bank robbers

DINO! YOU TAKE THAT RIGHT BACK WHERE YOU GOT IT!
FRED FLINTSTONE! STOP SHOUTING AT THAT POOR INNOCENT DINOSAUR!
BUT, WILMA...
YOU SAID YOU TRAINED HIM...WELL, YOU TAKE IT BACK TO FRANKENSTEINER!!
GOSH, BARN, HOW CAN WE PUT THIS CLOCK BACK WITHOUT LOOKING FISHY?
TIK-TOK
DON'T ASK ME! I'M GONNA WAIT OUTSIDE WHILE TIME MARCHES IN!
©1981 Hanna-Barbera

"Ironically, the wry humor that made the original *FLINTSTONES* such a hit when it first appeared in the early 1960s is probably considered too sophisticated by today's restrictive animation censors."

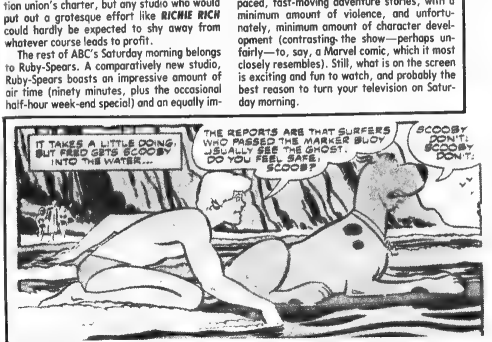
by throwing giant diamonds at them ought to be shot, and his money distributed to the starving hordes in Paraguay. Well, to the show's credit (and not to Hanna-Barbera's) there is some nice animation here and there, most of which is done in Australia. I say not to Hanna-Barbera's credit because for every bit of work the studio sends out of the country, that's less work for animators here in the USA. Of course, this is in direct violation of most of the provisions set forth in the animation union's charter, but any studio who would put out a grotesque effort like ***RICHIE RICH*** could hardly be expected to shy away from whatever course leads to profit.

The rest of ABC's Saturday morning belongs to Ruby-Spears. A comparatively new studio, Ruby-Spears boasts an impressive amount of air time (ninety minutes, plus the occasional half-hour week-end special) and an equally impressive line-up of talent including Steve Gerber, Mark Evanier, Jack Kirby and Alex Toth. Ruby-Spear's prize this season is ***THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN***, Saturday morning's first sword-and-sorcery series. Set several thousand years in Earth's future, ***THUNDARR*** concerns itself with the travels and adventures of Ookla the Mok (a giant, ape-like creature), Ariel (a sorceress), and the title character, a quasi-Conan-*cum*-Kamandi warrior.

The ***THUNDARR*** scripts are all good, tightly-paced, fast-moving adventure stories, with a minimum amount of violence, and unfortunately, minimum amount of character development (contrasting the show—perhaps unfairly—to, say, a Marvel comic, which it most closely resembles). Still, what is on the screen is exciting and fun to watch, and probably the best reason to turn your television on Saturday morning.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for Ruby-Spears' two other offerings, the ***PLASTIC MAN/BABY PLAS SHOW***, and ***HEATHCLIFF AND DING-BAT***. ***PLASTIC MAN*** is essentially last year's old "***Plastic Man***" cartoons with a new segment, "***Baby Plas***," tacked on. Baby Plas is the infant son of Plastic Man and Penny, Plas' last-season girlfriend/this-season wife. Baby Plas is distinguished for being possibly the most gruesome-looking ***creation ever*** to find its way to the television screen. What could be more frightening to an impressionable two-year old than watching a freakish, grinning youngster (who wears Devo glasses and speaks Mort Weisinger baby-talk) squash himself into a number of weird, grotesque forms? The parent groups were obviously asleep when this one came in the office.

HEATHCLIFF is the well-known comic-strip cat who shares a half-hour with another cartoon segment titled ***DING-BAT AND THE CREEPS. HEATHCLIFF*** I like, if only for Mel Blanc's voice in the title role, and the added vocal support from June Foray as Heathcliff's feline girlfriend. Most of the stories have been pretty good, too, which gives the viewer at least half a reason to tune in. I'd advise changing the channel during ***DING-BAT***, however. Another entry into the never-ending kooky monster series, ***DING-BAT*** is clearly a cartoon show that defies the viewer to guess what is going on. The principal characters are a talking pumpkin, a chubby skeleton and a dog that turns into a bat. (Wha-?) They run around for several minutes doing not much of anything, and then a commercial comes on. If nothing else, ***DING-BAT*** proves there is more than ample room for fresh ideas and experimentation in animation, and I for one, cannot wait to see it. ●


IT TAKES A LITTLE DOING, BUT FRED GETS SCOOBY INTO THE WATER...
THE REPORTS ARE THAT SURFERS WHO PASSED THE MARKER BUOY USUALLY SEE THE GHOST. DO YOU FEEL SAFE, SCOOB?
SCOOBY DON'T! SCOOBY DON'T!
1981 Hanna-Barbera

ANIMATED CHATTER

LET'S MAKE hash OF THE TITANS

by Robert Rhodes

In the middle-to-late 1950s, special effects director Ray Harryhausen won a cult following among film fans for his contributions to such sci-fi pot-boilers as ***20,000 YEARS TO EARTH.*** The format of such films was simple—a team of scientists discovered some gigantic creature, which later went berserk and destroyed a city before the beast was itself destroyed. The plots were silly and predictable, but they served as admirable showcases for Harryhausen's imaginative staging of his stop-motion animation monsters and creatures. That process, which involves filming single film frames of inanimate models in a consecutive manner, thus affecting the illusion of movement on the finished film, was perfect for combining fantastic figures with real actors and settings. The combination of the two very different types of filmed images proved to be very popular with fans of the fantastic, and Harryhausen (like Willis ***"KING KONG"*** O'Brien before him) aimed his career at fantasy filmmaking.

In the early sixties, Harryhausen moved more decisively into "fantasy" films (as opposed to "horror" movies). Starting with ***THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD***, he went on to produce the effects for ***THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, THE VALLEY OF GWANGI,*** and two more ***"Sinbad"*** films, ***GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD,*** and ***SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER.***

The resurgence of escapist adventure films in the 1970s brought Harryhausen and his work to the attention of a wider audience than ever before. With the mass popularity of ***STAR WARS*** and ***CLOSE ENCOUNTERS***, the special effects man became Hollywood's newest mogul (and as much a film's "star" as the director or any of the leading actors), and Ray Harryhausen was approached to lend his talents to a movie entitled ***CLASH OF THE TITANS***, which would rework several classic Greek myths.

Sadly, ***CLASH***, which opened this June after an extensive twelve-month advertising campaign, is more of a work-over than a reworking. The convoluted storyline is (as is usual in a Harryhausen movie) the weakest aspect of the film. It is basically the legend of Perseus and Andromeda, yet bits and pieces of other myths are thrown in to make it a rather confusing Grecian hodge-podge. The Perseus story's basic plot is reworked into an almost picaresque narrative which allows for nothing so much as for special effects to be thrown at the viewer at every turn. In the original legend, the young hero Perseus slays the gorgon Medusa and then rescues Princess Andromeda from a ravaging sea serpent—not bad stuff at all for the movies if done with some imagination and style, but unfortunately, little of either found its way into ***CLASH OF THE TITANS.*** As I said before, the main problem with the movie is the choppy unsuitability of the story. In a Harryhausen film, more often than not, the plot is used solely to space out the monster attacks, and by the film's seventh or eighth monster attack, the ploy's novelty has worn off, and the audience has pretty much forgotten whatever it was for which the hero was questing in the first place. So it is in ***CLASH***, where Perseus and his friends find themselves battling giant scorpions for no particular reason. It looks nice, and all the scorpions' legs move, but the story would have been much tighter without it. It also has no precedent whatsoever in the original myths.

(It's interesting to note the near-total disregard for the original myths which pervades ***CLASH OF THE TITANS.*** Wild deviations abound throughout the screenplay. It was, for instance, Bellerophon, not Perseus, who was the tamer of the winged horse Pegasus. Pegasus, in fact, was produced by the blood of the beheaded Medusa and, by rights, shouldn't show up until the last third of the movie—if at all. It seems, though, that one myth reads much the same as the others to the producers of ***CLASH***, so they threw all the remaining classical/mythological monsters they hadn't yet used into the film.)

As for the special effects, Harryhausen surpasses himself in some cases—particularly in the chilling Medusa scene, in which Perseus and the gorgon stalk each other in an eerie, half-lit temple. The color scheme as the light from the fire falls across Medusa's grotesque (but expressive) face is easily the most

THAT NIGHT, PERSEUS AND AMMON GO TO "THE SEVEN-TIERED TOWER CALLED "THE WELLS OF THE MOON" "HEY" OR "HEN WATCH IN AWE AS PERSEUS "HE LAST OF "THE WINGED HORSES OF ZEUS, COMES TO

A scene from the *CLASH* comic—art by Dan Spiegle

©1981 Boom Collapse Roger

evocative effect of the film. Also, early in the film when Sir Laurence Olivier (as Zeus) grows enraged at sadistic Prince Calibos and tranforms the hapless mortal into a demon, we see the change happening not to Calibos himself, but rather to the shadow of a small clay figure. The still shadow suddenly contorts and writhes as it sprouts horns and a tail. Then the camera pans back to show the once-normal clay image of Calibos twisted into the form of a hideous man-beast. ***CLASH*** could have used more of that sort of restraint and innovation. For the most part, Harryhausen chose to fall back on the same monsters, fights, stagings, and situations he's used for the last thirty years. The giant sea monster (called a Kraken) which makes a suspenseful appearance at the end of the film looks identical—facially—to the alien being from ***20,000 YEARS TO EARTH***. Perseus' battle with a two-headed wolf is staged in a remarkably similar manner as Sinbad's combat against a sabre-toothed tiger in ***EYE OF THE TIGER***.

But the shoddiness doesn't stop with just the recycling of old models and old action. Parts of the film look—cheap. When the sea god Poseidon first releases the Kraken, he does so by turning a wheel on an underwater gate. Filmed in a long shot, the scene is so poorly matted that it looks like the actor is standing in front of the movie screen, not back among the rocks, as intended. Later, when Perseus first captures Pegasus, shots of a real horse (in close-up) are interspersed with long shots of the stop-motion steed. The difference between the two "animals" is too great, and made worse when Perseus summarily alights on the back of an animal which the camera clearly displays as being a normal horse with no traces of wings whatsoever.

Probably the most disturbing aspect of ***CLASH OF THE TITANS***, though, is that although it ostensibly strove for an aura of fantasy and high adventure, it appeared that no one connected with the film had any fun with it. The all-star cast of actors playing the Olympian Gods simply stand around looking stiff and uncomfortable in their white, Kryptonreminiscent robes and mouth trite phrases about the ways of gods and men.

Though Harry Hamlin—as Perseus—is the hero of the film, he is not given much to do beyond standing around and looking confused until the next big monster attacks him. He is not motivated by any apparent reason to do the things he does—he is simply placed in stock adventure situations and reacts to them accordingly.

The secret of making an exciting fantasy or adventure film consists of considerably more than setting one's story in an exotic locale and introducing another monster—however imaginative—every five minutes. ***STAR WARS*** and ***RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK*** succeed as well as they do not because of their special effects, but for their expert portrayal of sufficiently identifiable characters and involving situations. Han Solo, for instance, can register many emotional responses to the many situations in which ***STAR WARS*** places him—and the more common and identifiable to the audience those emotions are, the more they will care what happens to him. Perseus, in ***CLASH***, is a one-dimensional hero archetype with insufficient humor—or anything else—to seriously interest the audience in his fate. What little humor there is in ***CLASH*** comes from Perseus' "pet" mechanical owl, Bubo (a shameless R2-D2 rip-off right down to beeps and whistles), and a protracted scene involving the three stooges—er, Stygian, witches.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that ***CLASH OF THE TITANS*** is not a bad film judged against the fantasy films of Harryhausen's heyday, but the fantasy film has come far since then. It's ironic and somewhat sad to think that Ray Harryhausen, who helped pioneer many of the technical advances in cinematic special effects, has been outstripped by those who learned from him. As Zeus tells the other immortals at the end of ***CLASH***, when men of courage and imagination come forth, the old gods and beliefs will fall by the wayside. That could, perhaps, be applied to Harryhausen's own willing self-obsolescence in the face of the new breed of fantasy filmmaker.

SATURDAY MORNINGS NEXT SEASON

Ruby Spears' extremely successful ***THUNDARR*** show will be expanded to a full hour next season. The extra time will be filled by the adventures of ***"Goldie Gold,"*** a girl who seems to be part James Bond and part Richie Rich. She was created by Steve Gerber, Norm Maurer, and Buzz Dixon, and designed by Jack Kirby. Several scripts are being prepared by the likes of Mark Evanier and Marty Pasko.

The Dingbats, of last season's ***HEATHCLIFF AND THE DINGBATS***, have been retired for the coming season. Their place will be taken by the dog Marmaduke, from the comic strip of the same name.

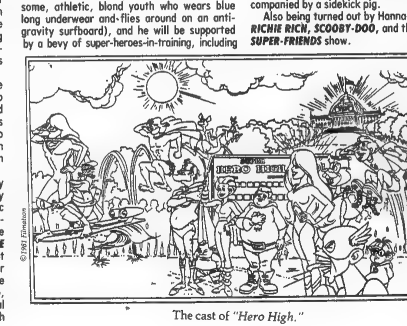
Filmation has sold a hefty number of animated shows to the networks this coming season. Captain Marvel and friends will return to the Saturday morning airwaves in all-new, all-animated episodes. The stories will include Junior and Mary, too, as well as Uncle Dudley, Mister Tawky Tawny, and Mister Mind. The other half of the new ***SHAZAM*** show will be filled by a new concept, ***"Hero High,"*** concerning a high school for super-heroes. The lead character is called Captain California (a handsome, athletic, blond youth who wears blue long underwear and flies around on an anti-gravity surfboard), and he will be supported by a bevy of super-heroes-in-training, including Glorious Gal, Rex Ruthless, Misty Magic, Punk Rocky, Weather Boy, and Brat-Man.

A semi-barbarian character called Blackstar will, if nothing else, acknowledge that ***THUNDARR***'s success is being noticed by the other studios and sponsors. Blackstar's groundsupport staff include many talented people known to comics audiences, including Marty Pasko, Bob Kline, Will Meignot, and Jesse Santos.

Marvel Entertainment, Marvel Comics' animation and special projects studio, will be producing ***SPIDER-MAN AND HIS AMAZING FRIENDS***, a loose off-shoot of the popular Marvel character's career. It will also feature Bobby (Iceman) Drake, and a new female super-character.

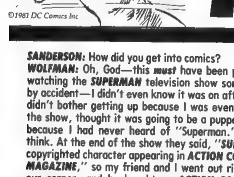
Hanna-Barbera will be premiering ***THE TROLLKINS***, described unofficially as a cross between ***THE FLINTSTONES*** and ***THE LORD OF THE RINGS***. Associated with the project is Phil Mendez, of DC's ***THREE MOUSKETEERS*** comics series. H-B will also be producing a ***LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY*** animated series for ABC. L&S will be cavorting in the Army and will be accompanied by a sidekick pig.

Also being turned out by Hanna-Barbera are ***RICHIE RICH, SCOOBY-DOO***, and the long-lived ***SUPER-FRIENDS*** show.



The cast of *"Hero High."*

Marv Wolfman's career in comics has been a long and varied one. He began as one of the leading names of comics' First Fandom, contributing to comics' letters pages in the early 1960s and editing and writing for a variety of fanzines. As it turned out, Wolfman became not only one of the first comics fans to enter the ranks of the professionals, but he also rose to become editor of Marvel's black and white magazine department, and eventually, Marvel's editor-in-chief. During his first stint at DC, Wolfman served as Joe Kubert's assistant editor, and wrote the original *TEEN TITANS* series, *BLACKHAWK*, and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *"John Carter,"* which he would write again for Marvel when the latter company took over the rights to the character. At Marvel in the 1970s, where he eventually settled into the position of writer-editor, Wolfman wrote *THE FANTASTIC FOUR, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, SPIDER-WOMAN, MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE, POWER MAN* and *WEREWOLF BY NIGHT*, as well as creating and writing *NOVA* and *SKULL THE SLAYER*. Together with Len Wein he edited and plotted the Marvel novel series for Pocket Books. Wolfman and Wein collaborated in writing the first of the series, the *"Spider-Man"* novel *MURDER IN MANHATTAN*, and Wolfman wrote the *"Fantastic Four"* novel featuring Dr. Doom himself. He also wrote the novel *THE OZ ENCOUNTER* for Byron Preiss, took over the *HOWARD THE DUCK* newspaper strip, and put together a continuity strip with Ross Andru called *THE UNEXPLAINED*, which may appear in the future. Now back at DC, Wolfman has worked on *BATMAN*, is currently writing *GREEN LANTERN* and the *"Superman"* stories for *ACTION*, and along



COMICS FEATURE INTERVIEWS:

MARV WOLFMAN

SANDERSON: How did you get into comics?

WOLFMAN: Oh, God—this ***must*** have been printed before...I was watching the ***SUPERMAN*** television show sometime back in 1951, by accident—I didn't even know it was on after ***HOWDY DOODY***—I didn't bother getting up because I was even lazy back then—saw the show, thought it was going to be a puppet show or something, because I had never heard of "Superman." I was about five, I think. At the end of the show they said, ***"SUPERMAN*** is based on a copyrighted character appearing in ***ACTION COMICS*** and ***SUPERMAN MAGAZINE,"*** so my friend and I went out right after the show to our corner, and he bought an ***ACTION COMICS*** and I bought a ***SUPERBOY***. And that was the beginning. It was sometime in 1951.

SANDERSON: And which were the books you most liked when you were growing up?

WOLFMAN: ***SUPERMAN***—all the ***"Superman"*** books. Later on I started picking up ***BATMAN***; from there, I went to the Archie Comics, the Harvey Comics—there weren't that many books that I saw. I never saw an EC Comic; I never saw any of the horror or crime stuff of the early 1950s. Either the people in our area censored them or we just never got them, I don't know. But I pretty much bought whatever I could.

SANDERSON: But it wasn't until you were a teenager that Marvels hit the stands.

WOLFMAN: Well, that was 1961; I was born in 1946. So what is that—15? Yeah. But by that point, of course, ***FLASH*** had come out [1956], and ***LOIS LANE*** came out a few months later, and ***GREEN LANTERN*** and ***THE ATOM*** and ***HAWKMAN*** and ***THE JUSTICE LEAGUE*** had all appeared. So by that point, I had really gotten into superheroes and thought I knew them fairly well. Again, I had never even seen a Marvel comic—maybe because I wasn't interested in monsters or something, so I didn't bother—but a friend of mine called up and said, "Hey, there's this new comic book out, and it's the sixth issue—it has this guy who turns into flame, another who stretches like Plastic Man," (obviously we must have known about Plastic Man, but I can't see how), and I went out and bought it and proceeded not to like it.

I had picked up issue #6, and wasn't that—?

SANDERSON: Sub-Mariner and Dr. Doom.

WOLFMAN: Yeah, right. And I had no idea who either of these characters were, and I didn't know who the heroes were, and it totally confused me. But about a month later, I bought the next issue or so, and I was on a vacation, and there was absolutely nothing to do, so I went to a news-stand. That's when the first ***THOR*** came out. And ***"Master of Planet X" [FF #7]*** was out at the same time—my timing may be a little off there...

SANDERSON: I think you're right.

WOLFMAN: But those two both threw me—I mean, I just loved what Kirby did with those full-page chapter headings. There's this one that you're looking down past Reed Richards and it seems like endless levels. He did this magnificent art job, and I loved it—even the stupid mistake at the end—and I loved ***"Thor"*** too. There was always something about the look of Thor that I always liked. I have a picture of Thor up in my room. He was, visually, my favorite Marvel character. Kirby just gave him such power.

SANDERSON: So it was the visual qualities of Marvel Comics that drew you into it.

WOLFMAN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, as I say, the first issue of ***FF*** wasn't a story I could understand; I managed to get the past issues fairly quickly, because they were a nickel each—as opposed to the thousand dollars it is today—and then I was able to appreciate the stories, because I did like the first Dr. Doom, and I ***certainly*** liked the first Sub-Mariner. When Spider-Man came out, I was already buying ***AMAZING FANTASY***, or ***AMAZING ADULT FANTASY***, and it sort of bothered me that they changed it to ***SPIDER-MAN***, but I liked it by the time the first or second issue came out. I didn't like the one in ***AMAZING FANTASY*** because I thought it was real crude. By the time he was in his regular book, I was taken in. I really liked the character at that point.

SANDERSON: Now, you were in ***early*** comics fandom.

WOLFMAN: Oh, God...

SANDERSON: How'd you get in, and what was it like publishing fanzines back then?

WOLFMAN: How did I get in? I had a letter published in an early ***MYSTERY IN SPACE***, with my address. And G.B. Love and Jerry Bails sent me the current issues of their fanzines—they were sending them to everybody whose address appeared in a comic book.

SANDERSON: What was the title of the fanzine?

WOLFMAN: It was ***THE ROCKET'S BLAST***, before it became ***RBCC***, and it was ***THE COMIC READER***. They were both #13. So I entered one month after one year of organized fandom. I think within two

with Wein created the new *DIAL 'H' FOR HERO* series. He and George Perez intend to do a series of graphic novels centering on a character named Janus for Flying Buttress, and Wolfman plans to do work for *ECLIPSE* magazine and various other alternative publications.

To my mind Marv Wolfman's foremost achievements in comics so far have been his long and rich collaboration with artist Gene Colan on Marvel's *TOMB OF DRACULA* and his current work on DC's *THE NEW TEEN TITANS*, which is one of DC's best-selling comics. Wolfman created the new *TITANS* series in partnership with the book's artist George Perez and its editor Len Wein. As for Dracula, Wolfman's work with that character is far from finished: he and Colan are doing a serial in which the Count crosses paths with Jack the Ripper.

If I had to point to a single reason for the excellence of Wolfman's work with Dracula and the new Titans, it would be his skill at depicting and exploring characterization. A story engages a reader's emotions when it deals with characters who seem real. Wolfman may deal with vampires and super-heroes, but in his best work he gives his characters, however fantastic they may be, that necessary aura of reality. The reader comes to care about those characters, to feel that he knows people somewhat like them, and even to recognize parts of himself in them.

This interview was conducted on April 21, 1981, by Peter Gillis and myself in New York City. It was transcribed by Kurt Busiek and Bob Soron, and edited by Marv Wolfman and Richard Howell.

—PETER SANDERSON

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OLFMAN

months I was already contributing. Since I lived in New York, and DC had tours of their offices every Tuesday and Thursday, which was later cut down to Thursdays, I gave a report of going on a tour. There were so few fans at that time, just the talk of what was going on at a company was the biggest thing in the world. It was so much fun—most people never saw a professional. They didn't know what they looked like. Just the idea of being able to tell all the other people out there what it was like, going up to DC Comics—I think I had several letters published just about that thing—doing it several times, giving them what was going on at DC Comics at that point.

Then, at some point down the line, I decided to publish a fanzine. It was a humor fanzine, called ***THE FOOB***, based on something I had done for high school—it was very similar to ***HOWARD THE DUCK***, by the way. It was this funny animal character running around in the real world—this was in 1964, I guess, around 1963—the civil rights movement. It was just a funny animal.

SANDERSON: Not a particular kind.

WOLFMAN: No, it was an invented animal, supposedly a deformed dinosaur that sort of walked weird. And then I decided to publish a super-hero fanzine, called ***SUPER ADVENTURES***, which I wrote most of and had other people draw, including myself. Then I did ***STORIES OF SUSPENSE***, which was a horror fanzine (even though I didn't like horror, which was real strange), and then I did the strangest of them all, ***WHAT TH...?***, that was free. It was sixteen pages, eight pieces of paper—sixteen sides. It was as much weight as I could mail with one first-class stamp. One more page would have made it two stamps. The people just had to send me money for the envelope and stamp, which was a dime—otherwise, the magazine was free. And it was sort of like people's letters and contributions, talking and interviewing—all of this was done on a ditto reproduction. And through the various fanzines, I started getting letters from the professionals back. I guess maybe having gone up to the companies, I understood some of the problems, so Murray Boltinoff would write back, thanking me and talking about the reviews we had done on the magazines, and Julie Schwartz would write back, and I'd publish those letters.

SANDERSON: How big was the audience of these zines?

WOLFMAN: Well, when you're working on ditto, you can't get more than 150. By the time I gave one out to every professional editor that I felt was important, I guess I had an average circulation of a hundred or something. I never made a penny on it. I think I lost on every issue.

SANDERSON: Would any of these fans whose letters appeared in these zines or in these reviews be people who we'd recognize now as professionals?

WOLFMAN: Oh, yeah!

GILLIS: Steven King wrote his first story for you...

WOLFMAN: Well, he didn't write it **for** me. It was sent **to** me. I edited it and changed the title which—when I first wrote to Steven King I was a little trepidatious that he may have hated the change in title, but he says it's one of the few things that saves his ability to still look at it. It was originally called, ***"I Was a Teen-Age Grave Robber"*** (Laughter), which you understand if you read his stories about how he got into writing and stuff—he talks about loving the the old ***"I Was a Teen-Age Monster/Frankenstein/Idiot/Whatever"*** movies that they ran in the 1950s, and...

SANDERSON: What did you change it to?

WOLFMAN: It was a line out of the story. ***"In a Half-World of Terror."*** Which was a lot closer, and, I thought, a lot better. I did a fairly heavy editing job on it. Interestingly enough, in my little editorial in the beginning, I made a comment about the story which read: "It grabs me the way the B-movies and the type of thing you'd see on ***CHILLER THEATER*** and all this stuff [do]." And that was very much what influenced King, according to his own biographies and such. It was a nice story.

But a lot of people did work. I worked with Steve Leialoha on a sword-and-sorcery series in ***STORIES OF SUSPENSE;*** Len, of course, was working at the time. He was publishing his own fanzine, and we did work for each other. It's hard to even think, frankly. I can't even remember all of them—I'd have to take them out. You'd be surprised at the number of letters and things that you'd get from people. Fred Hembeck told me that I'd published some of his, too. But I didn't remember this, because I haven't looked at the fanzines in so long.

SANDERSON: And Hembeck said he thought I was incredibly old because I had letters going back to 1966, but he was in your fanzines. Well, anyway...

Apparently, then, right from the beginning, because of these tours and living in New York, you had a lot of contact with

professionals. Do you think this changed your attitudes toward the companies from what other fans might think of them?

WOLFMAN: I think so. You can't help but go on a tour and somehow stay there anyway even after the tour is over, and speak to the people without realizing the problems and learning very quickly. Also, I was trying to be an artist, and trying very specifically to break into comics, so I'd spend some time up there and Carmine Infantino would show me how to draw hands, or somebody else would show me how draw this, or whatever. And you have got to learn the problems of putting the magazines out. They would talk to you, because it was such a novelty—they never thought anyone cared, or read the stuff. They had no ideas, at that point—because fandom was so new, and so few people lived in New York City—that anyone really showed any interest in the stuff. So they would talk to you when you talked to them. They were interested. Carmine had a desk up there, and Murphy Anderson had a desk up there, so that was very impressive. I saw Julie Schwartz, and I'd always loved Julie's books, but he scared the hell out of me, because he was a very imposing-type person, if you know what I mean. He still scares people as they start to work for him. He's like this giant pussycat. The Cowardly Lion is a perfect way of describing him, because he comes out seemingly ferocious. I love working with the man.

SANDERSON: How long did it take you to discover he was a pussycat?

WOLFMAN: When I came back to DC last year (laughter). Len kept telling me, but I couldn't believe it, because previously I had sold Julie one job, a "***Tales of Krypton***" story which was totally massacred by both of us. I presented a story that was one thing and he wanted it to be something completely different, and by the time it was done, it was a catastrophe. When I came back to DC last January, his first comment to me was, "You do write better than the '***All in the Mind***' story?" and I said, "God, Julie, you remember that? It was a seven-page back-up."

SANDERSON: What's it like, working with Schwartz now?

WOLFMAN: I love it. If there's a problem, it's that I'm so used to coming in with complete stories—finished—that I'll come in and have the plot already worked out, and the one thing Julie really loves is to plot. He just wishes I would come in with the germ of an idea so we could sit down together and just knock it out. He's the type who gets more excited about stuff than I do. I'm very laid-back when I'm in an editorial conference; I sort of sit there and say, "And then this happens, and this happens, and this happens," and he's going excitedly, "Oh wow, and then we're gonna do this, and—oh, no, let's try this, and let's try this, and—" I mean, he really gets into the whole plotting thing. So I made sure, last month, that when we got together to do a ***SUPERMAN***, all I has was the germ of an idea—so we could sit down together and plot the thing, because that is the thing that makes him so happy. He enjoys doing that. So I really love working with him. He also is the first person I've worked with whose technical knowledge is so far superior to my own that he has been able to pierce all the holes in stories, whereas most of the people I've worked with have not been able to do that. Len corrects my grammar, wherever that goes astray, but he's not as strong a plotter as Julie, so he may not spot a mistake there. But Julie is, and nothing gets through. So he's been pointing out all of these things. He rewrites dialogue occasionally on my stuff, and invariably he's correct; he knows what the character is, and even though I've been reading ***SUPERMAN*** since 1951, he's shown me how to sort of economize on my writing when I've overwritten. He's taken out lines, and cut it down, and shown me how to do the captions, even after this is my fourteenth year in comics. I'm learning, I think, more from him than I ever had before, because I never really worked ***with*** an editor to any great extent. Dick Giordano is one of my favorite editors, but he edited through inspiration somehow. I have no real concept of the way Dick worked. But you sit down with Dick and somehow you were inspired to do the best thing you can do, if not better. And somehow you did it. But I don't know what he does to get all this out of you. You just want to work well for Dick. It's not a technical process

with Giordano...

SANDERSON: Enthusiasm?

WOLFMAN: Yes, enthusiasm. It's personalities. He has the type of personality that you'll go out of your way to do ***anything*** for. Len and I are friends, so that's a very strange editorial relationship. Julie and I work the way I always wanted to; I always wanted to have an editor who could say, "No, this is the way it should be done," because everything I've ever learned as a writer has been self-taught. Marvel never had any editors. Roy really didn't act as an editor when I got there. He may have beforehand, but he was on the verge of quitting at that point. All he ever did was really look over my first ***TOMB OF DRACULA***, liked it, and said "Go ahead."

But Julie is my first real editor, actually, who edits my stuff and knows why he does it—I love working with him. He'll always listen to you. If you don't like one of the changes he'll make and you can tell him why, he'll change it right back to what you had.

SANDERSON: You said when you started at DC Comics, you were afraid he was going to impose all sorts of restrictions on your stories.

WOLFMAN: I was real nervous about that. He hasn't. He even went out of his way to say, "Don't do what you think is a Julie Schwartz story." I still do occasionally. The readership of ***SUPERMAN*** is totally different from the readership of any other book I've ever worked on. The "***Vandel Savage,***" the two-parter that I really liked, which would have been understood easily in ***THE TEEN TITANS,*** was not understood in a "***Superman***" story. We got letters after the first part, saying, "What's going on here? Something's wrong; this doesn't sound right." It's like the readers of "***Superman***" wanted me to plant clues—wanted me to state that something was wrong. Because I didn't state that the villain had planned this all, they were confused.

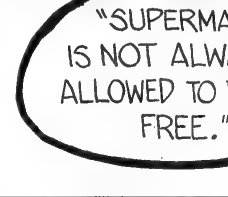
SANDERSON: Do you think that's because its readership is younger, or is it a different kind of taste?

WOLFMAN: I think the readership *is* younger. I think they are the first readership that enters comics, super-hero comics at least. Maybe they have a different taste, as well.

So my view of handling ***"Superman"*** now is a little different from what I may have done. If I were totally in charge of the series, I'd still do what I wanted in the long run, and try to change the readership. But I'm working very hard not to change ***"Superman"*** to any great degree. I didn't want to come in there like I did on ***SPIDERMAN*** and say, "Gone, gone, gone, gone, go away —all this stuff goes, and I'm taking over." I'm only one writer, and I don't feel this right as one writer of the character, who is not the editor, who is not in charge of the book, to say, "Well, no, it's going to be done my way." I'm writing it pretty much the way Superman has been written, sneaking in little things here and there. I got the Daily Planet globe back on, and there's the Clark-Lois relationship that goes back to the way I'd like to see it, with Clark a little more klutzy, Lois not thinking he's the greatest person around, sort of the earlier ***"Superman."*** My view of Superman is the eternal triangle—she loves Superman, Superman ignores her, and Lois dislikes Clark. You have to bring it up to date, but that's sort of what I'm doing.

SANDERSON: Well, why does Superman ignore Lois?

WOLFMAN: It's that same thing that Siegel and Shuster set up. Obviously, ***that*** relationship has not entered into the story-line because we can't right now. They've professed their love of one another, and I wish I could get out of that. I don't like that, since nothing could ever happen with it. They can't get married; they can't consummate their love; they can't move in together. I think it was a mistake several years back to have them profess that love. If it was up to me, I'd slowly change that, and have it so she loves him, but he tries not to show the same back.



SANDERSON: And because he wants her to love him for his ordinary Clark self doesn't mean that Clark can't be the total put-on that Clark has to be.

WOLFMAN: Clark has to be a real person, but he can't be the hero he is now. He's the anchorman for the six o'clock news! This is a top-notch person! I don't think that makes any sense. I would rather see Clark leave the TV network. Superman, the way I see it, would not want Clark Kent's face that well-known.

SANDERSON: Despite the glasses.

WOLFMAN: That story was invented by Mopee. (Laughter) That story and the ***"Mopee"*** story are zilch. That's what happens when you listen to bad ideas. Good fan input, bad ideas.

SANDERSON: What I meant was that there's a traditional idea that Clark is a put-on by Superman, that he goes out of his way to act cowardly, to act klutzy, but if you feel that Superman wants Lois to love him as Clark, for what he can do without his super-powers, not as a character but somebody who does what any normal man could do—perhaps quite well, since he's a top reporter—and wants to impress Lois ***that*** way.

WOLFMAN: He should, but at the same time, I don't think he's going out of his way to. I like the way Chris Reeve does things—it's almost as if Clark was a little bit absent-minded in places. When we put the globe back on the Planet, I had Lois and Jimmy and Perry White saying how great it is, and Morgan Edge hates the whole thing since it's poised directly over his penthouse which is on the roof, and they had finally convinced him to do all this, and everyone's going "Yay! Yay! Yay!" and Clark walks in and says, "I never liked the globe anyway," and they all start razzing him. It's that sort of relationship. I'm just trying to take the edge off him being center-stage. Superman, at least as far as I'm concerned, would not want to call attention to Clark. He should be there, he could do his job well. A little bit klutzy, so people would not think of him right off the top. That's why I don't like the idea of a TV network and, in fact, that's why I don't even like the idea that he's a *top* reporter. He should just be a good reporter. Superman couldn't do anything badly.

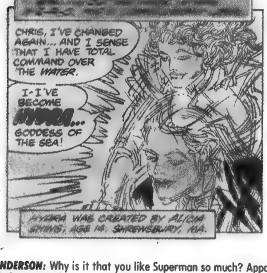
I think the movie handled Clark a lot better than the comic has, but that began under Mort—that sort of changeover in the relationship between Clark, Lois, and Superman. Mort started to do that, and Julie kept taking that in the same direction, because that was basically what he had inherited. I think it's been taken too far.

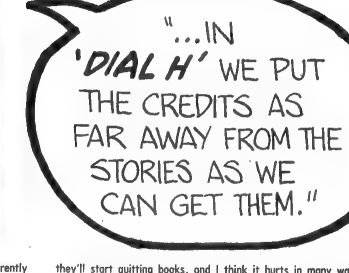
SANDERSON: I always liked the idea of Clark as a newspaper reporter. It's like he's a detective. He snoops around, so nobody really notices him as he's tracking down a story. He finds out what's going on, and Superman comes in and saves the day.

WOLFMAN: It's not particularly a glamor job, despite Woodward and Bernstein. You don't know who most reporters are—TV anchormen you do, and I really think that's a mistake, and maybe if I keep pounding people over the head, someone will listen.

SANDERSON: You also said ***SUPERMAN*** proved to be a hard book to write?

WOLFMAN: I think primarily it's because he has all those damn powers. I'd been wondering, "Why in the world does every writer keep saddling him with earthquakes and tornadoes?" The reason is, he could flick his finger and the crook is dead. So it's taken a while to come up with the story-lines that I feel comfortable in handling, that *use* Superman's powers. One of my complaints is that Superman is not always allowed to burst free. Can you imagine putting restraints on Thor while he's in a fight, and when he fights, half of New York City goes. I think Superman should sometimes be more like this. The two-parter that I just did with the character Neutron is very much like that; they're destroying half the city while they're in the midst of the fight. A lot of stuff is blown up, and that sort of thing. Superman has to use his powers, basically.


CHRIS, I'VE CHANGED AGAIN... AND I SENSE THAT I HAVE TOTAL COMMAND OVER THE WATER.
I-I'VE BECOME HYDRA... GODDESS OF THE SEA!
HYDRA WAS CREATED BY ALICIA SCHMID, AGE 14. SHREVEPORT, LA.
©1987 DC Comics



SANDERSON: Why is it that you like Superman so much? Apparently he's been your favorite since way back.

WOLFMAN: To me, he is the super-hero. I like the costume; I like the concept; I think it's primal. Even the name says it. This is Superman: this is **the** character. You analyze it any further, and the concept is Moses and Christ, in many ways, and all the mythology behind it—it's a very basic concept. I think in this case the basics work. He's always proven the most fascinating character to me. In some ways, misused, but always very good.

SANDERSON: Let's go back to fandom days. How would you compare the attitudes and intensity of fandom back then to now?

WOLFMAN: Real fandom, I don't know today—that is, the actual fans who are buying the comics and who love them. That is not what seems to be the majority. What is pushed in fandom these days is the collecting, the spending of money, how much a comic is. Back then, there wasn't that. This was a year into comics fandom; people were in it only because they loved it. I don't know if that same feel of love—pure love—exists today. Maybe I'm wrong; some of the younger fans, and some of the older ones who have never got into collecting as a means of business.

Also, back then, without the knowledge of who the professionals were, you just enjoyed the book. You did not have the thing where, "Oh, I'm going to follow so-and-so's story-lines" or "This person's God" or "This person's garbage" or whatever. You just read a book. It didn't matter. I didn't know that there were three artists on each issue of ***SUPERMAN.*** I just read it.

SANDERSON: What do you think of the "star system?"

WOLFMAN: I think it's stupid. I never liked it. I worked for the first three years of my career virtually without credits, so I really don't care about it. If you've noticed, in "***Dial H***" we put the credits as far away from the stories as we can get them, so that it didn't interfere with the comic book. I think it's dumb because it's idolizing someone for totally the wrong reasons.

I think it hurts a lot of the professionals. I think there are a lot of professionals whose egos need that soothing to such a degree, they become crazed about it. They actually believe everything the fans tell them. Their egos are stroked to the point where their heads swell.

You have to remember what we're doing. We're doing entertainment stories that are not very heavy, that may have a little message here and there but it is certainly not to be taken overly seriously. We're producing a little entertainment thing. We are not producing the next greatest thing since God. I think there are actually professionals who think they **are** producing the next greatest thing since God. They go ranting and raving about how the wrong person is put on their strips or the wrong inker—I'll complain about an inker, too, because you want the best. But they'll go crazy, they'll start quitting books, and I think it hurts in many ways. They're less stable people. The ones who take it as a profession are going to do the best jobs they can, and yes, it's nice to have your ego massaged every so often. But let's be serious: we read the mail. We get many letters who say I'm the best writer since writer X. And writer X doesn't even know the English language. That's put me in my position. That's the greatest left-handed compliment in the world. Frank Miller keeps mentioning the people who come up to him and say how great he is and how much they don't like Frank Robbins. "You don't know what you're talking about, guy! Go away! Don't congratulate me!" If you're going to listen to the congratulations, you're going to have to listen to the stupid comments, too.

The best thing to do is take the suggestions made in the letters, listen to them, and keep them back there, in your head, and ignore all the praise because it really is meaningless. It means as much as nothing, because most of the people who write in don't know what they're talking about. There's only a few letter-writers each month who actually have a comment that is interesting to read. They'll point out mistakes in the story or talk about things that I care about. I read all the mail. Most of it is, "The ***TEEN TITANS*** is the greatest thing that's ever existed. You people are magnificent, and all the other comics are garbage compared to this comic." No. There are a lot of other good books. So I take it all in stride. The fact that ***TEEN TITANS*** is the biggest thing since God means very little to me, because I thought some of my work on ***DRACULA*** was better. Not that I'm trying any less; it's just that I have an affinity for Dracula, and the plotting was much more original, since nothing had ever been done in the territory. ***DRACULA*** was almost unnoticed for eight years. We survived just by a very loyal readership. But it never got any fan following or even an article during its entire existence.

SANDERSON: Why do you think that is?

WOLFMAN: Many fans are just interested in super-heroes. Fairly simple-minded super-heroes. When you try to do something more than fight, they tend not to like it as much. That bothers me. I'd rather do a story with a little more depth. I'm very much surprised, because issue #8 of The Titans has gotten very good mail. This is the first time I've seen a story that has no fights get good reaction to it. Usually the stories that have anything but heroes beating up villains get a very negative reaction.

You have to keep it all in perspective, and just keep saying, "We're just doing this; we're not doing Dostoevsky or ***something*** that has real depth to it." You do what Roy Thomas once said about Marvel Comics: "Marvel Comics is like 3-D comics; it has the ***illusion*** of depth." That's what we're doing. We try to have an illusion of depth to it. We create personality, but there's only so much you

can do. You only have so many words per panel and you can't have every shade of emotion, and you can't really do everything you may want to do.

SANDERSON: Do you think there's any difference between the fan writings in the publications from back when you were into fandom and right now?

WOLFMAN: Fan writing when I was around in the early days was all historic. Today it's mostly critique. We were doing things like the early days of comics and the early creators, things of that sort. I think there's some of it done today—I think more lately than in all the 1970s. I see more people coming out with an interest in the last few years than I did for years. But it's coming back, which is a good sign—trying to get to the old pros before they die.

SANDERSON: When you were a fan, you went around getting a book of sketches. Were people surprised at that? Since this was fairly early in the days of comics fandom, were people surprised that you'd want sketches?

WOLFMAN: Yeah, most of them. They didn't get their artwork back and at that point they didn't even *want* their artwork back. They didn't see much value in what they were doing. They didn't realize the stuff was good, or, certainly, was entertaining. Their jaws would fall and they'd say, "Oh, yeah, I'd love to do a drawing. Thank you." They'd thank you for letting them do a drawing for you. (laughter) You're all the way up there, elevated, and Mr. Frank Frazetta, you'd go up to him at a convention, and he'd be sitting there doing sketches for everyone. It's only after people started taking those sketches and selling them that the professionals realized, "Wait a second..." It was a lot nicer, because people were actually reading them. There was no real reason to think of comics in terms of money; it was in terms of enjoyment.

SANDERSON: How did you actually break into comics themselves?

WOLFMAN: Through the fanzines. As I said, I mailed copies of the fanzines to everybody. Most of my fanzines were comic strip-type things, to learn how to write and draw. By the time I felt I was ready, they already knew who I was. So Len and I submitted a story that we had tried to do for Dick Giordano at Charlton, but he'd already left. We presented it to Joe Orlando, who was up at DC, since Dick was out that day; Joe didn't like the artwork, but said, "Why don't you try writing some stories for the mystery books?" I typed up a bunch of plots that night, submitted them, and he accepted them and gave us the checks at that point.

SANDERSON: So I expect you consider the mystery books as a training ground?

WOLFMAN: I think it's the perfect one. You have to learn how to write a story in six pages. You have to create a world, create your characters, create a plot, create a resolution for your characters all in six to eight pages... Sometimes it's even less—you may have a three-page story or a two-page story. It forces you to learn to condense and say everything you want to in as few words as possible, in as few panels as possible. I think it's the only real training ground you can have. If you learn on 20-page stories, you're filling it. You can have, as I say, 19 or 20 pages of fight, and nobody's really going to object.

SANDERSON: But you eventually worked your way up to being Joe Kubert's assistant editor. What was that like?

WOLFMAN: Well, I had quit comics for a year—I didn't really quit; I sort of left. I was an art teacher for a year. I was still writing for Skywald at that point, because they would take things through the mail, as opposed to DC, and I lived all the way out in Lake Ronkonkoma, and it was too long a trip to come in. The glut of teachers had finally peaked; the school had to cut back. At that point, I was let go—pretty much everyone who had just been hired was let go.

So, I came back into the city. At that time, Joe Kubert had just gotten the Tarzan stuff; he needed an assistant editor. I went, "Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi! Hi!" and introduced myself, and he said, "Sure, come on." I became his assistant editor, or editorial assistant, as he preferred—it was in the credits as editorial assistant. I don't know what the difference is, but that's what he wanted. I proofread for him, and I did it so well that—there's a little drawing that he did upstairs in my office, of Tarzan and an ape, which says, "To

SUSPECTING THE FANTASTIC SECRET, AN X-RAY VISION PROBE PROVIDES THE PROOF...
WHAT SHEER GENIUS! DR. NOVIL DESIGNED THIS DEVICE TO CONVERT HIS BRAIN CELLS INTO INTELLIGENT ELECTRICAL IMPULSES...
WHICH THE HELMET TRANSMITTED INTO THE SKY-PROBE'S COMPUTER BANKS...
WOW'S MORE LIKELY THAT, JEFF!
"SUPERMAN IS THE PRIMAL HERO."
©1982 DC Comics

the assistant editor's assistant editor. That is spelled?" because my spelling was atrocious. I missed every mistake he could have made. I put together all the reprint books, I proofread the stuff, I'd do rewriting on some stuff. I wrote, of course, the John Carter strip for him. One time an ***UNKNOWN SOLDIER*** script didn't get in, so we had to quickly adapt a ***SGT. ROCK*** story, and I'd do all the rewriting on that, and he'd do all the fixing up of faces to rework this ***UNKNOWN SOLDIER*** story.

SANDERSON: What was he like professionally?

WOLFMAN: Joe was very nice. He's a big guy, very powerful, and could crush all three of us in one hand. He's a weightlifter, and very energetic. He's also amazingly young when you consider he's been in the business for nine hundred years. You think of Joe Kubert having drawn in ***ALL STAR COMICS*** and you think he must be 90 years old. And I think he's in his early 50s—if that; I don't even know. Maybe in his late 40s. He started when he was **twelve.** He's an incredibly talented man; I disagreed with some of his writing approach, but I could not possibly disagree with his art. It's brilliant. He is one of the few geniuses around as far as artwork. He walked in one day and threw the first issue of ***TARZAN*** on my desk, said "Proofread it," and about five weeks later my jaw finally came back in from looking at this magnificent art.

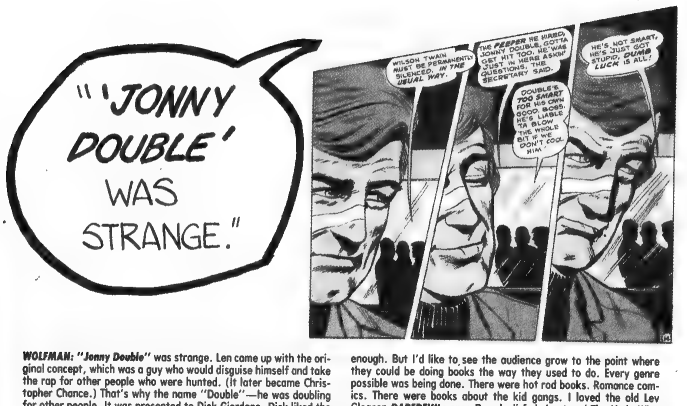
SANDERSON: You were saying that once you did a war story for him and he...

WOLFMAN: Oh, yeah. I did an intro to ***WEIRD WAR***—I used to put that together. It was all reprint stories except for the introduction. He had me write one, and he used all the copy, but none of my panel descriptions. If I did six panels on a page, he turned it into nine. He repaced the entire story. And it was **brilliant**. This is how you could tell a story. And after five years of being in comics, I finally understood how to tell a story from this one time working with Joe Kubert. Just seeing how he visually took something and changed it all. Left every word intact. It was just incredible.

My writing actually changed very much after that. I became a lot more cinematic in my approach. I tried things that I never would have done—I think that helped. I don't think he even consciously did it. He just said, "No, this is the way you do it," and he did it.

SANDERSON (to Gillis): You wanted to ask about Jonny Double?

GILLIS: One of the things I've heard you say a number of times is that there aren't enough genres, ***diverse*** genres in comics. One of the things that you did at DC, which was definitely unique for them, was **"Jonny Double."**


"I 'JONNY DOUBLE' WAS STRANGE."
WILSON, TWAIN MUST BE PERMANENTLY SILENCED, IN THE USUAL WAY.
THE PEEPER BE WIRED. JONNY DOUBLE, WE GOTTA GET HIM TO COME IN HERE ASAP! QUESTIONS, SECRETARY SAID.
DOUBLE'S TOO SMART FOR HIS OWN GOOD. HE'S LIABLE TA BLOW THE WHOLE BIT. IF YOU DON'T COOL HIM...
HE'S NOT SMART, HE'S JUST GOT STUPID, DUMB LUCK IS ALL!

WOLFMAN:* "Jonny Double"** was strange. Len came up with the original concept, which was a guy who would disguise himself and take the rap for other people who were hunted. (It later became Christopher Chance.) That's why the name "Double"—he was doubling for other people. It was presented to Dick Giordano. Dick liked the name, but didn't like the idea of the agent—maybe because they had ***"The Unknown Soldier"; I don't know. He just didn't think it was a good concept. He suggested we re-work it. We did, and at this point, Len and I were going through our own problems, adjusting to egos and stuff. You know—we were making a big $4000 a year, and we weren't quite able to adjust to the fact that we had just turned professional. If you remember, there was virtually no one else our age in the industry, certainly not at DC. So we were feuding between ourselves a little bit. Dick asked us separately to come up with plots, because it was obvious we would never be able to work together. This was at the worst point of our relationship. We had one plot that we had done together; I plotted one story and he plotted one story. Because I am the stronger of the two plotters—he's much stronger as a dialoguer—my plot was taken. And because neither of us were that good, Joe Gill was brought in to write it. We wanted to try something else.

I think fans expect heroes to be a certain way, which I like to get out of. I don't have any idea of what to ***do***, but I'd like to see someone come in today and do to comics what Stan did twenty years ago, which was revolutionize it. I wish I knew what the approach should be, but I don't have it. No one yet has come in and done that. I would like to see the companies try some different types of books.

SANDERSON: Do you think there's a certain inertia in comic book fans, that they come into it because super-heroes are such a powerful concept that they don't feel any impetus to look elsewhere?

WOLFMAN: On the regular comics racks, possibly. I don't know how big the average comic book fan is on the funny animal books. Not the little kids, but the regular fans who buy, say, the majority of ***SPIDER-MAN*s. *HOWARD THE DUCK*** didn't sell past the first couple of issues; I don't know of any funny animal book, I don't know of any book about women which has sold. Crime books are never bought, it seems. It just seems as if anything that's a little bit different does not have an audience in the regular comics market. Maybe the alternative press is the best thing, since we can aim at exactly the number of people that ***are*** interested. Maybe there are only 30,000 people who ***do*** want to see this. And that may be enough. But I'd like to see the audience grow to the point where they could be doing books the way they used to do. Every genre possible was being done. There were hot rod books. Romance comics. There were books about the kid gangs. I loved the old Lev Gleason ***DAREDEVIL*s** once Daredevil faded out and The Little Wise Guys were the main characters. They were beautiful! Beautifully-written stories by Charles Biro. All sorts of things like this.

SANDERSON: Do you feel your own work has been influenced by comics or cartoon material you've seen in other genres—for example, I asked you about the ***"Two-Face"*** stories, and you said you had liked the Maximus stories from ***ON STAGE...***

WOLFMAN: I don't think—I never thought those ***"Two-Face"*** stories were any good.

SANDERSON: Well, also, since you're so interested in characterization and making the characters real, do you feel that what you've read in romance comic books or strips, or learning to write them yourself, has influenced this?

WOLFMAN: I don't think any of that influenced the comics—reading has influenced that. Maybe some comic strip stuff, like ***MODESTY BLAISE***, or Leonard Starr [***ON STAGE, ANNIE***], but mostly outside reading has done that.

SANDERSON: Such as what?

WOLFMAN: It's strange, because the type of reading I've been doing over the last several years has been non-fiction. The things I would mention: a lot of autobiographies—I can't even begin to name them—and that's the stuff that I enjoy reading. And also history. That probably influences my interest for non-super-hero-type stuff. More than anything, I would love to do historicals. Something set in other time periods. Stories about people, maybe, because I ***do*** enjoy biographies so much. I read too little fiction. I'd like to get back into reading fiction, but whenever I have the time, I tend to buy a biography or a history book.

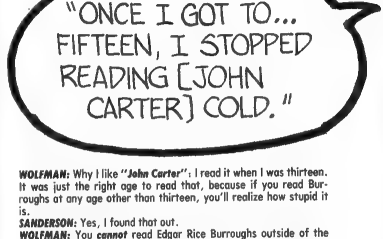
SANDERSON: Are there any genres in comics that you ***don't*** particularly like? For example, I don't think you've ever done a sword-and-sorcery story.

WOLFMAN: I'm not a big sword-and-sorcery fan. Was ***JOHN CARTER OF MARS*** sword-and-sorcery?

SANDERSON: I was leading up to that: Why you don't like sword-and-sorcery much, but you ***do*** like ***"John Carter?"***

WOLFMAN: I don't know. Is that science fiction or is it sword-and-sorcery? Or is it both?

SANDERSON: It's both—a melding, as it were.



ANOTHER LIFE TO SNUFF!
ONLY WITH LINGSMANIAN TENDERNESS HE ARE CAREFULLY LIFTED THE FRAGILE, UNCONSCIOUS FORM, AND GENTLY GRASPED IT IN ITS POWERFUL HAND--
...LIFTING IT HIGH ENOUGH FOR HE TO FINALLY SEE.
MY GOD! DEJAH THORIS!
NO!
DEJAH THORIS!
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WOLFMAN: Why I like "***John Carter***"s: I read it when I was thirteen. It was just the right age to read that, because if you read Burroughs at any age other than thirteen, you'll realize how stupid it is.

SANDERSON: Yes, I found that out.

WOLFMAN: You ***cannot*** read Edgar Rice Burroughs outside of the age of thirteen to fifteen. I think that's the only time period to read it. And since I was reading it at that point, it was fine. Once I got to about fifteen, I stopped reading it cold.

SANDERSON: How would you compare the DC "***John Carter***" to the Marvel ***JOHN CARTER***?

WOLFMAN: Well, this is the one difference that Joe Kubert and I had. See, Joe had not read the stuff when we were first beginning; but he read it by the time we did the third issue. He never read "***John Carter***" again. We convinced him to put "***John Carter***" in the back of the book because it was Burroughs' next most well-known series. He was editing, and decided on a course of action for "***John Carter***" before he had read it, based on what I was handing in to him. Consequently, I did not like the first batch of "***John Carter***"s we did together. When Denny took over the editing, we moved it a little closer to the book. The problem we had there was, every issue we were told it was going to be the last issue. If you look at it, almost every issue it ended. Finally, we were told, "No, the book's going to last forever," so I started this whole long epic-type story-line, and the next issue was the last one. I had to wrap it all up in thirteen pages. So we never got anything started on the DC "***John Carter***" that was at all correct. At Marvel, our problem was that we had plenty of time for the first issue, and then every single issue of ***JOHN CARTER*** was written overnight, because I received the artwork so late that the previous issue was on sale—of a monthly comic book. That meant we had one week to produce the entire book, from beginning to end, in order to be on sale three weeks later. So almost none of the Marvel ***JOHN CARTER***s do I like, because I had to plot them overnight. I would invariably get a call from Gil saying, "I'm going to be in tomorrow with the whole book; get in tomorrow, because I need a plot," and I'd be staying up all night, trying to restructure the plot to make it make sense, and invariably, Gil wouldn't come in for six or eight weeks, some ungodly amount of time. It was issue after issue like this, and everyone on the staff was going insane trying to produce this book. None of us were happy with the material, because it had to be done ***too*** fast, because the artwork was coming in late. Finally, Gil got off the book, and Carmine got on. By that time, I had been so spoiled, and so resentful of having to turn it out at that rate of speed, and because I didn't like the material I was producing, that I finally said goodbye. It was getting to that point, and I just wanted to slow down and perfect the material rather than churn it out. I was known at Marvel as "the guy who can get it overnight if you need it." It wasn't the best thing to do, because yeah, I can write a story overnight, but it's not going to be as good as if I take three or four days to write a "***Titans***" story. I write five pages a day now. I take it at a nice, leisurely pace.

SANDERSON: Now, the first credit that you got for a DC story was a story that Gerry Conway actually dialogued?

WOLFMAN: That wasn't the first credit; we had a couple of credits and suddenly vanished from sight after one of the ***TEEN TITANS***, because we tried to do a black super-hero in ***TEEN TITANS*** and management at that particular point took offense to it. The story was scrapped, and we [Wolfman and Wein] sort of got into a lot of trouble, and basically all of our work dried up.

SANDERSON: How'd you get on the original ***TEEN TITANS***?

WOLFMAN: I'd liked The Teen Titans when they first came out; I had liked what Bob Haney was doing. Then Dick Giordano came in, and wanted a different approach. He asked Len and me to try a story; he asked Mike Friedrich to try a story; it was basically trying to get various stories around. Len and I came in with three ideas: we came in with the idea of a Russian super-hero, which was Len's idea, a black super-hero, which was my idea—I may be wrong; it may be reversed—it really doesn't make any difference—and the origin of Wonder Girl; that was totally mine. It was a separate thing.

SANDERSON: By any chance was Len's Russian super-hero anything like Marvel's?

WOLFMAN: No. The character that saw print in ***TEEN TITANS #18*** was Starfire...

SANDERSON: That makes a third?

WOLFMAN: That was the original Starfire—we came up with the first Starfire name. So we had all the right to steal it again. In fact, there were four. There was a "***Supergirl***" villain—which I did, oddly enough—but I didn't name her Starfire—they changed it to Starfire after I did the script.

So we came in with the three ideas. The first one was drawn; no problem, we did it. We did the second one—the black super-hero—and Nick Cardy did a ***magnificent*** art job on it. Just tremendous. He had tried some new techniques that had never been seen and done in comics before. We put our heart and soul into it, and probably over-wrote it, but there was a change in management at that point, and Carmine decided he didn't like the story. Neal Adams said, "Look, I'll rewrite it—I'll do it over a weekend," and rewrote the story, but they still decided to kill it. And when they killed the story, our careers were virtually killed, for a little while there. All of the work suddenly dried up instantly. Dick, bless his heart, and

Joe Orlando, when he was able to, still fed us little mystery stories—gave us whatever work we could get. We had not yet broken in with Julie Schwartz; so I don't think Julie would have stuck up for us at that point. But we had not done anything; Julie likes to work with you when you know what you're doing. He doesn't like to break in people.

SANDERSON: Which issue was this that the black super-hero got introduced?

WOLFMAN: The cover had already been sent to the printers; it was ***"Titans Fight the Battle of Jericho"****—all they could do was put a tone over the whole crowd, but if you look at it carefully, the whole crowd is composed of blacks attacking The Teen Titans. Neal redrew the issue completely, wrote his own story, but used some of the actual artwork from the original story. There are pages of Nick Cardy's original story in there—not many, but just a few. Nick inked it—that was all done over a weekend—for those people who say Neal can't meet a deadline.

SANDERSON: And what was the original story-line like?

WOLFMAN: In our naivete—and I realize that we probably overwrote it; I still have the script—some people were inciting black gangs into rioting, taking advantage of the problems that already existed, primarily to sell weapons to both sides. They were inciting race riots, and The Teen Titans came in and solved everything. It was typical, "We'll show you the way! We can make peace!" But that was the big thing at the time.

One of the blacks had a brother who turned out to be a super-hero, under the name of Jericho. Neal redrew it, and turned it into a totally different type of story—the hero was "Joshua," or something—it was a white super-hero, and had nothing at all to do with the original story-line. I secretly plotted the second half—that was their way of doing it. They'd say, "Look, I know we're not supposed to be giving you a lot of work right now, but here, plot the second half." So I plotted the second half, Neal plotted the third, which had a Wonder Girl back-up, and after that, we did mystery stories for the next year or so, whenever we could get work. Dick always managed to get us, somehow, three-page stories, at least. So we didn't get *too* discouraged. Slowly, we got over it. That's part of the reason I had been doing teaching. But most of those stories didn't have credits; it was not a policy of putting credits on the mystery books, except for the one story that Gerry introduced—he wrote the intros to all the stories—he put "This story was told by a wandering wolfman," knowing that I had written the story. The Comics Code rejected it, saying you couldn't have wolfmen, because this was before werewolves and Draculas. So there had to be a credit on the story, saying "This was by Marv Wolfman," so that made sense. So I got a credit pasted onto a story only for that reason—just so the Comics Code would be appeased.

SANDERSON: So you're the one who came up with Wonder Girl's origin.

WOLFMAN: Yes, I did.

SANDERSON: She had always needed one.

WOLFMAN: She *had* no origin. The problem with Wonder Girl was that she was a computer image, created so that Queen Hippolyta could do this thing with showing Wonder Woman, Wonder Girl, and Wonder Tot—all the same person—as if "What would their adventures be like if the three ages of Wonder Woman ever met?" Bob [Kanigher, ***WW***'s writer/editor] was just trying to find any way to save ***WONDER WOMAN.*** He was going in all different fashions. They were cute little stupid stories, if you liked fantasy stories. But the other editors didn't know this, and when they just saw Wonder Girl, and thought Wonder Girl was a character, and put her in The Teen Titans. But there was no explanation for where this character came from! She wasn't the sister of Wonder Woman, because Wonder Woman had no sister. The other editors never even read each other's books; I don't know if they even talked to each other back then. So there's this character, and I'm pulling my hair out, saying, "Oh my God, come up with *something*!" But nobody did, until I finally sat down and created the origin story for Wonder Girl. And, as I jokingly have said since I returned to DC, it was very nice of DC to forget that that story existed. Nobody bothered to do a thing about the origin. I planted all these clues; for nine years, nothing was ever picked up on. Of all the Wonder Girl stories that were ever done, and all The Teen Titans stories that followed, the origin of Wonder Girl—*nobody* picked up on that origin story. It was like it was waiting nine years for me to come back and do what I was originally going to do.

SANDERSON: For the benefit of those readers who didn't see that origin story, could you recap it?

WOLFMAN: I showed it in ***TEEN TITANS #1***—Wonder Girl as a baby, being caught in a fire, two people whom we assume are her parents are dead, and Wonder Woman saves her. She's brought to Paradise Island where she's trained and goes under the purple ray that Wonder Woman created—so the origin is set up, and I can do what I was actually going to do back then, only brought up to date. Everything is.

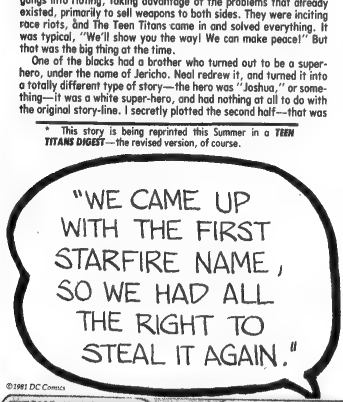
SANDERSON: Can you give us any hints on what you're going to reveal?

WOLFMAN: No. (Laughter)

SANDERSON: How did you manage to get back into comics after the ***"Jericho"*** episode?

WOLFMAN: As I say, we always managed to get a story or two. It was never a total blacklist; it was like, "They don't get many features." Len was working on a ***METAL MEN*** story that suddenly he didn't dialogue, he was doing a ***TOMAHAWK*** story that suddenly they didn't need any more. I was phasing out of comics at that point, and going back to teaching, so time healed it. Another reason there was a semi-blacklisting—if that could be called blacklisting—was that they thought that we had stolen some artwork. Who else would steal artwork but the fans? We were the two fans on the premises. But they later found out who had stolen it. But time and

* This story is being reprinted this Summer in a ***TEEN TITANS DIGEST***—the revised version, of course.


"WE CAME UP WITH THE FIRST STARFIRE NAME, SO WE HAD ALL THE RIGHT TO STEAL IT AGAIN."
©1981 DC Comics
TITMANS, MEET YOUR RUSSIAN COUNTERPART--STARFIRE!
PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
I CANNOT SAY THE SAME, AMERICAN! I AM HERE ONLY OUT OF DUTY TO MY COUNTRY--NOTHING MORE!

THANKS, JOSH, GLAD YOU CAME BACK. THOSE KIDS HAVE WATER PISTOLS, BY THE WAY, NOT GUNS!
MY INFORMATION WAS THAT THEY WERE GIVEN GUNS! THEY MUST'VE DITCHED THEM AND PICKED UP THE WATER PISTOLS... THAT ALONE PROVES THEY'RE NOT REALLY BAD KIDS!
NOT BAD... JUST A LITTLE SHORT-TEMPERED, IS ALL!
©1981 DC Comics

"ONE OF THE BLACKS HAD A BROTHER WHO TURNED OUT TO BE A SUPER-HERO."

that—once they found out what had happened—eased it, made it acceptable for us to be back, and, in fact, for all of the younger generation that followed, to come into comics, at least at DC. Right after that, there was this huge influx where everybody started coming in.

SANDERSON: Now, you spent some time at Warren being an editor.

WOLFMAN: I went to Warren from DC. They (DC) had cut back from their quarter books—which were giant-sized books—to the regular 20¢ comic books. They didn't need the assistant editors, so we were all let go. I went to Warren... I can't even tell you ***how*** I got that job. I assume it was because I had been an assistant editor at DC and they needed somebody—they must've known who I was, or something. I was just called. I was there for something like eight months. I did a bunch of things up there that still affect Warren today. One of the things I had tried to do was create series concepts for Warren, and also book concepts. So instead of every issue of ***EERIE*** being exactly the same, I wanted to have an all-vampire issue, beginning with the first vampire and going to the last vampire. I called up Doug Moench, and he did a couple stories for that. I called up writers who I knew were interested in certain things. If there was a history buff, I'd have him do a certain story. There was one guy who loved science-fiction, so I had him do a science-fiction vampire story. I did that for vampires, I did it for werewolves, I did it for various concepts, to try to create a book look. I also tried to approach Warren at that time to use characters, as opposed to just mystery stories. They've gone into that with a vengeance now. I had begun that concept.

SANDERSON: Did you edit all the books there?

WOLFMAN: I edited all the books there, except for ***FAMOUS MONSTERS.*** I was the story editor. Bill Dubay was the art editor. Roy Thomas called me up at one point—I was writing ***"Dracula"*** at that point, while I was still working on staff at Warren—offering me an editorial job, and I turned it down. I don't know why, but I did. He called several months later, offering it to me again, and after about a month of indecision, I decided to take it. I was making only $100 a week at Warren, and Roy offered me, I think, $150. (Laughs)

SANDERSON: Wasn't it at Rutland that you decided to take it?

WOLFMAN: Well, I used the Rutland vacation to finally make up my mind, but it took about a month to decide that I was doing it. I've never been able to make changes easily. So I told Warren I was going to leave, I gave him a month's notice, and he went into my office, ripped all the posters off my wall, broke my coffee cup, and...

SANDERSON: Really?!

WOLFMAN: Yeah, he broke my coffee cup. I worked there under verbal abuse for about a month; every day, it would be, "Hello, traitor! How long do you have?" I don't know if he was serious or joking; it was hard to tell at that point. I played it real straight. I kept working as hard as I could, and as best as I could, and kept still offering ideas. At the end, I had to stop, because I knew I was going to be editing Marvel's black-and-white books, with Roy (and eventually instead of Roy) and so I couldn't offer Warren everything. But for a month I worked three days a week on staff at Warren, and two days a week at Marvel (laughs), which Warren never found about until this interview.

SANDERSON: Roy seemed to have brought in a number of people. What did you think of him in his role as Editor-in-Chief when he was recruiting talent?

WOLFMAN: Roy, I think, had the same attitude that Stan had, which was bring in the best people you can. Roy was never worried about, say, bringing in someone better than him. There weren't any, but I don't think it would have bothered him if there were. The only one who would come close is Archie [Goodwin], who I think is on a par, an exact par. Either one rises or falls, depending on when their story comes out. When I read an Archie Goodwin story, he's the best, when I read a Roy Thomas one, he is. Roy was very open to ideas, allowed you to do almost anything—he managed to find ways to get you into the company before you knew you were there. Len had no intention of ever coming over, but ***slowly*** found himself working full-time for Marvel, even though he was doing ***SWAMP THING*** at DC. He had no idea he was ever going to be brought over, but—book by book by book. Roy knew how to handle people like that. He also gave you your freedom, and made you feel that you weren't just working for him, though he could come down on you when he wanted to, and tear your story apart, if he wished to, because he was a better writer than you were. But he had a very good way of getting you to work for him, and I think he was a real good editor. I came in, again, at the end of Roy's tenure—he only stayed about another eight months, and at that time he was also involved with his divorce, and a lot of things, so there were some problems with his total concentration at that particular point. But I had a great respect for Roy, both as a writer, and as the Editor-in-Chief of the company.

SANDERSON: Now, how much contact did you have with Stan in

terms of being a Marvel writer?

WOLFMAN: As a Marvel writer, none, but as a Marvel editor, total. I worked with Stan very closely. Stan was there all the time, always offering advice. When we created ***CRAZY***, I was the editor, and I worked only with Stan; Roy would have nothing to do with the book. Stan would always be coming in, and having meetings on what he wanted to see. He went over all of the covers. We'd always get the reason why he'd make the changes, and whatever else. We knew exactly what Stan wanted at that point. He made it very clear.

(A short discussion follows in which Wolfman mentions that the Marvel black-and-white line was created under him.)

But Marvel never gave their full commitment to it, that was the problem. No one wanted to commit themselves to the staff. As Don [Mc Gregor] could tell you, we were producing fifteen black-and-whites with the staff of two. I could never convince the upstairs people that there were as many pages in the fifteen black-and-whites as there were in the entire color comics line—and they [the color comics] had five people. We were stuck with that, and stuck with all sorts of problems. I had to actually convince Marvel to create the production department for the black-and-white department. We used to farm the books out to Harry Chester Studios, and whatever they pasted up, they pasted up. I formed the first production staff, hired the first layout people, paste-up people. There was never a full commitment to the black-and-whites—it was like they were a bastard child, and they didn't know what to do with it.

SANDERSON: When you became Editor-in-Chief, was it quite what you expected?

GILLIS: Did you have as much power as you expected?

WOLFMAN: Oh sure, like a nervous breakdown. No, that job is not what you can expect, because you don't have any power. You have all the power in the world to do nothing. I was working at that particular time with very highly-tempered people. It was very difficult to tell Steve Englehart—maybe a stronger editor could do it—to tell Steve Englehart to do something, or Steve Gerber, or Don, or 90% of the staff that was there was very emotionally high-strung people. The job was physically exhausting, exhaustive—you were asked to produce 53 books with a staff of four people, besides the Editor-in-Chief, so five in all. At that point, it was the concept that the Editor-in-Chief (there was no Editor-in-Chief, it was just an editor and his assistants, and the assistants were all new, so you really couldn't give them a lot of heavy work to do; you couldn't ask them to edit the stuff, and no one person can edit 53 books) had to do was, like, occasionally goose the people in the right direction. I had a secretary who had a list of people—just to call. The only way I knew that I'd be able to make sure I spoke to everybody that worked at Marvel was to have a secretary have mandatory phone calls—"At 11:00 this morning, she will call this person" and it was on the chart. Once a month I managed to speak to everybody. Writers were less problem, but all you could do, really, was edit sort c' egatively instead of positively. You stop people from going too far astray, rather than guiding them—if a book was selling well, you pretty much left the people alone. If a book wasn't selling well, you try and find a way to solve it. It was a job that was just impossible. I think it's what finally killed everybody that's been in the job. Jim got around it by actually creating editors. Probably a smart thing to do, except that it takes the central position of one person knowing what's going on, and directing it, so therefore you can have covers repeating like Marvel's been doing lately; Dr. Doom appearing in 37 books at the same time, and that never would have happened in the past. It was a hard situation. The only things that I was very pleased with was that the entire year that I was Editor-in-Chief not a single person quit, nor did we ever have a reprint the entire year I was there. I always managed to find a way; we kept on schedule, we had weekly meetings, I think that's where all my time was spent, was in meetings with Sol Brodsky and John Verpoorten, to keep on schedule. We never once

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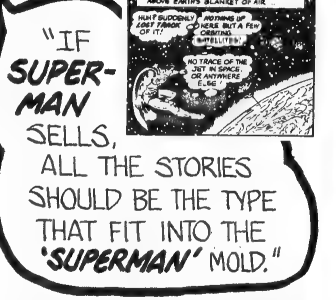
"IF SUPER-MAN SELLS, ALL THE STORIES SHOULD BE THE TYPE THAT FIT INTO THE 'SUPERMAN' MOLD."
HOWEVER, UPON ENTERING THE STARRY REALM ABOVE EARTH'S BLANKET OF AIR...
HUH? SUDDENLY I LOST FIRMAMENT OF IT?
NOTHING UP HERE BUT A FEW ORBITING SATELLITES!
NO TRACE OF THE JET IN SPACE, OR ANYWHERE ELSE!

had to resort to a reprint. And that was the only year. I mean, years before, and years after, there were reprints right and left, but this one year there wasn't a single reprint. Also, I was very pleased to be able to inaugurate a couple new books—that was the ***HOWARD THE DUCK*** book and a few of the others that maybe wouldn't have gotten through with another editor, because it was the strange kind of stuff I like.

SANDERSON: What, ideally, do you think is the function of an editor in comics?

WOLFMAN: First of all, an editor should have a limited number of books so he can actually edit. An editor should control the line, or whatever book it is.

SANDERSON: By what do you mean "control the line?"

WOLFMAN: I mean, he's the one in charge. An editor should be the person in charge, it shouldn't be the freelancer, which is very strange for a freelancer to say. I think the best editors are those who can keep "the book" the most important thing. After all, the staff comes and goes, and the idea is that the book should stay there, so that I probably would have resented what I had done on ***SPIDER-MAN*** if I were a strong editor in charge of everything but since I was my own editor it was okay. A book should maintain a look, a visual look and a consistency. If it's not selling you should know that and change it, but if a book is selling you should keep it going, and figure out why it's selling. If a book sells, like I think ***SPIDER-MAN*** sells (or sold), because of a constant evolution and movement—even if it's just an apparent movement—that's what you should do, you shouldn't stagnate it. If ***SUPERMAN*** sells, all the stories should be the type that fit into the ***SUPERMAN*** mold. You can break out of it, for individual stories, but the characters should never vary. I would have resented, for instance, what Englehart did on Batman, because he decided he would do their six issues and to Hell with everyone else. Yeah, his six issues were very good, but it's just his six issues alone. Those six issues had nothing to do with Batman before or after. Maybe if that's the way they decided to go with Batman, fine, use those six issues as a model, and say "okay, we're going to do this type of thing from now on." The book really has to be the important thing—you shouldn't have it change every time the staff changes, unless there's a reason to it, namely bad sales. I think an editor should guide you, an editor should encourage you. I think an editor should do like what Dick Giordano does, somehow magically make you want to do the best job you ever could do. I think an editor has to fix up all your mistakes in such a way that you don't feel you're a schmuck, that you should walk out of an editor's office saying, "He fixed it up, and I learned some-

"AS FOR NOW.."
ENTER FREELY, DRACULA, AND OF YOUR OWN WILL.
AH, HOW TOUCHING -- YOU REMEMBERED THE WORDS FROM YOUR FATHER'S JOURNAL.
I SHOULD HAVE SLAIN THE FOOL BEFORE HE EVER WROTE THEM.
:AHEM!: GOOD EVENING, QUINCY-- HOW PLEASANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
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thing." There are people who can phrase their corrections, and their total rewriting of your job, and you're very happy about it. I used to say Stan Lee could pull you into a meeting and castrate you in front of a thousand cheering cannibals and you'd thank him, because he had a style about him that was so warm and pleasing that you could never get angry at him, whereas some other people can give you a million dollars in cash tax-free and you wonder what's going on. An editor has to be all of that. He has to be very strict, very firm, and know when to be lenient. He has to be able to guide you, he has to be able to say "no," he has to be able to say "yes," he has to be able to give, if he knows it's going to create a major problem in the wrong area; sometimes swallow his own pride, if it's over something not that important. They have to be a mother, and they have to be father, y'know, it's everything all at once, but they have to know story, they have to know structure, which is sometimes even more important than knowing story, they have to know plotting, they have to know dialogue—they don't necessarily have to be able to do it; Julie Schwartz, I think, has written two stories in his entire life, but he can fix up anybody else's story. They have to know all of that, plus they have to remember that their only job is to sell that stupid comic book. So they really have a lot of pressure on them, and a good editor keeps all that in mind and knows how to roll with it. A bad editor falls into the trap of stopping you from doing something that's correct, because it involves his ego, or your ego, and all of us, who maybe have gotten the editorial job at the wrong age, fell into that. I'm sure we all made drastic mistakes and stuff. But that's my general idea of what an editor is, he's sort of like the old person in charge, the all-seeing guide.

SANDERSON: But nevertheless you feel that you can have people that are writer/editors as well.

WOLFMAN: Yeah, I think you can, if you pick and choose. DC once said that the reason they didn't believe in the writer/editor thing is that it invariably goes to the wrong people. My answer is "you don't let it go to the wrong people. If it goes to the wrong people you take it away from them." I see nothing wrong with giving someone a try, and if it doesn't work out, saying "no." But it's very hard, it seems, in the comic book industry to say "no." So if Roy Thomas is good as a writer/editor, why bother putting an editor on him? What you need is a proofreader with some power. Or a telephone, preferably. That's all. Roy doesn't really need an editor, he just needs a very good proofreader, someone who can spot a mistake that Roy may make. I never argued the need for an editor on my stuff, I only wanted good editors. There's a little difference in the meaning of those. The concept of editor doesn't bother me, the concept of bad editors does. I'd rather not have mistakes put into my books, I put enough of them in myself.

"SO I READ THE NOVEL [DRACULA] AND INSTANTLY FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NOVEL."

GILLIS: Now, you've stated that originally you had no interest in vampires, and you detest horror comics, so what is it that's drawn you so strongly to Dracula?

WOLFMAN: What happened was I was on **CAPTAIN MARVEL** for those two absolutely vomitable issues and I asked to get off it, and to get on **DR. STRANGE**, which was the book I wanted to write. Roy said **DR. STRANGE** was unavailable, but I could get on **DRACULA.** A problem with that was that I had never seen a **"Dracula"** movie in my life, and really couldn't have cared less about **DRACULA.** I've just never been really interested in horror films—I'm very squeamish, and they actually do affect me. I get sick at them, and I wanna have to run out, otherwise I'd probably throw up or something. I take the stuff very seriously, I guess. During **THE EXORCIST**, I had

to walk out of it, and just sit, for like twenty minutes in the cold air, before I could stand up again. I was forced to have to see it again. As editor of ***CRAZY***, I couldn't get anyone else to do a take-off of it. I went with Len Wein, and he was on tranquilizers for a medical condition, and he gave me two of them, and we're sitting there, watching ***THE EXORCIST*** on tranquilizers, so it wouldn't bother me. That's how bad I am about those things.

So I read the ***DRACULA*** novel at that point. I had no conception of Dracula outside of the things that people have done on TV, to imitate Bela Lugosi. You can almost learn everything you have to, through osmosis somehow. So I read the novel, and instantly fell in love with the novel. The novel is very well done. It's more subtle than you would realize—the version I showed you upstairs, which is the Annotated Dracula, pointed out things that I had no concept of when I read it the first time, because I just didn't understand the references Stoker was making—minor things at the time, or historical things, or plays I had never seen, or certainly a lot of religious texts that I obviously would never have read. But he sort of put everything together. The novel is told from the point of view—it's diaries, actually, journals, letters, and it's never told from the point of view of Dracula, but told through how people react to Dracula. Dracula appears on very few pages of the book. It's 300+ pages, and he may appear on about 40 of them, maybe. So it's really about the effect of evil on people and that whole approach. It was exactly the opposite of anything that I expected Dracula to be. It really influenced the entire concept of how I was going to handle the book from that point on. I had been given the series, there had been three writers on it at that point. Gerry Conway had done issues #1 and #2, Archie Goodwin did #3 and #4, and Gardner Fox had done #5 and #6, and I did #7 through #70 trying to do different types of stories, from different points of view, and we did one through a tape recorder once, which was various people watching Dracula cross from Europe to America—just to try to keep adjusting the perspective on how to present the book, so that it would always be a people-oriented thing.

GILLIS: And the ***"Dracula's Diary"***—?

WOLFMAN: ***"Dracula's Diary?"*** Well, that came about because I didn't have a plot. Gene [Colan] called up, and was faster than he'd expected to be, and needed a plot by the next day, and I sat there all day long, trying to come up with a ***DRACULA*** plot. I couldn't come up with a single thing and finally, at about one o'clock in the morning, I realized, "I'm not going to have a plot for tomorrow, but I have all these really neat short plots; these small concepts that I discarded, and said 'No that's only a four-page story'"—and I refused to pad. I said "why don't I do a bunch of four-page stories, all told from the point of view of Dracula?" and that's how the diary was formed. The two issues I did [of] the ***"Diaries"*** became some of the most well-recieved issues that we got on the book, but it was pure desperation, trying to have a story in time.

SANDERSON: But you see, whereas Stoker concentrates on how all these other people regard Dracula, who himself remains quite mysterious, the way ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** developed was more and more, as in the ***"Diary"*** issues, exploring Dracula.

WOLFMAN: Well, this is what happened: it slowly turned around. Everything was hitting it all at one time. I was doing all the stories from the points of view of other people, for the longest time, and we'd gotten sales figures, and I began to notice that the sales figures were slowly moving down. Now, I expected that, because by that point, all the other horror series had died and ***DRACULA*** was the only one left alive. We still had respectable figures, but not what they used to be. In the early issues of ***DRACULA***, it wasn't odd for an issue to sell 60%. Today, just in comparison, you're very happy if a book sells 39—to show you where the difference in sales then and now—also the print runs were larger. At this point, like, I had become editor, and I decided to make a big change, all in one issue. I decided to move Dracula from London to America, because I thought bringing him closer to the main readership would help. He was too far away, and London sort of gave you the feeling that it was the 1890s, even though it was the present time. I would also add a comedy element (which was Harold and Aurora), change the logo (which I designed), and put Gene Colan on the covers (which I never could convince anyone to do before me—they kept giving them to Gil Kane, who draws some of the best super-hero stuff around, but some of the worst mood stuff, because he has an open-line quality to his work). So the sales just shot up with that issue, the issue that got him to America, where all these things happened at once, and the sales remained pretty high for the rest of the series. But at the same time I decided to, again, try and sell it. Since the super-heroes were obviously selling, I did a whole series of super-hero type storylines. With Dr. Sun, if you noticed, all the stories emphasized muscles—the covers, at least—and super-science-fiction and stuff. Once you start doing that, once the threat has to go at Dracula, as opposed to Dracula being the threat, the focus of the book has to change. Once the sales picked up, I got

"[TOMB OF DRACULA] WOULD ALWAYS BE A PEOPLE-ORIENTED THING."
BUT I MUST DECIDE I MUST!
AND ANOTHER METHOD MUST BE FOUND TO STOP DOCTOR SUN!
THERE IS NO REASON FOR ME TO EXIST--DRACULA MUST REMAIN DEAD!

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rid of the science fiction again (because I never wanted to do it anyway, it was just a way to keep the book alive), and got Dracula involved with the Satan Cult, and then Domini, and again, at this point, everything had to be oriented around Dracula, as opposed to around the Hunters. The other part was, I was trying to not do the story about Rachel, Frank, and Quincy failing every month, which is what the book could have easily become, and was becoming. It was: They would go after Dracula, they would almost defeat him, he would stop them at the last moment and get away, because I couldn't kill off the character. The focus had to shift for sales reasons, and I think it actually helped because once I had to start giving a lot more thought to Dracula, I though I got some better stories also about other people; some of the Domini stories, the story about the girl in the library, with the books, and the one about the vampiress who wants to be killed. They started to move to Dracula and I started realizing that Dracula had to have some sort of catharsis, it couldn't keep going in the same direction. I don't know quite why, but Domini became very important to him, and to the book. I realized, in order to make it work, Dracula himself had to change, and that led to the whole storyline, to the very end, where he actually had to embrace God and the total destruction of what he had been previously. Where it would have gone after that, I'm not sure.

SANDERSON: Are you happy, then, with the way Dracula was brought back in the second black and white version, because when he was revived, after ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** itself was cancelled, he seemed to be back to the same old character without any sign of his having come near the grace of God.

WOLFMAN: We killed the comic book not because of bad sales—it wasn't the world's greatest seller, but it certainly wasn't nearly a bad seller, they would have kept it alive for as long as we wanted —but because Gene wasn't really available. He didn't want to go on with the book at that point. He had quit the book at one section, and I had convinced him to do one more story, where we'd kill Dracula off. I then quickly found out that we couldn't do that, and changed the book into a black and white. They decided as a black and white, the book would make a fortune. So we decided to kill the color comic, which is why we got Gene back for an issue, or two issues, whatever. He knew it was dying, so he didn't mind being in on it. Also at that point, we were so far ahead, we were like six issues ahead when we went bi-monthly, so Gene was off the book for almost a year. So by the time we actually did create the black and white book, he didn't mind drawing it again, he'd had a year off from the character (except for covers) and that's how we got Gene on the regular series again. But I did those first stories, and my idea was—since I didn't know who was going to draw them—was that Dracula died in issue #70, and these are stories that have no relation to the comic book, and I was going to do a totally different Dracula. I had to revive him acknowledging the series, but if I could've gotten around that I probably would have, and indeed, beginning with the fourth issue, had I stayed on the book, they would have all been stories taking place in other times, so they would never even have come close to ***DRACULA***. I didn't want any reference to the comic book, because I felt that it had taken it to exactly the place it could have gone. I mean I did have other storylines, that's why I had Topaz come down to Hell with Dracula, because she was very much involved with the whole retransformation of Dracula back into evil, without realizing it—all sorts of stuff.

The idea I was really going for was the total changeover, and the fact that the evil could not exist in the long run, and the way it had been. He had to go under the change. And he had to go under the change simply because I had to change the focus for sales purposes from outside people to Dracula himself. It was motivated by sales, but I thought we got a better book out of it.

SANDERSON: But what I'm trying to get at is if you had stayed on the ***DRACULA*** series once it—

WOLFMAN: If it hadn't stayed as a color book, I would never have done any of these stories. If you've noticed, Topaz was never even mentioned, she's still in Hell. On the black and white book I had no intention of ever mentioning Domini again, or anybody, I just wanted—the color comic was by itself.

SANDERSON: Well, since the revival of Dracula in the first issue of the magazine was tied in to the color comic, don't you feel there was a need for a story which would explain why Dracula was acting evil again?

WOLFMAN: If I had thought about it for two seconds I would have somehow started the ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** black and white in the past, and never had had modern stories. I regret not doing that. I had come to the decision too late. the ***"Dracula/Jack the Ripper"*** that I'm doing was one of the ***TOMB OF DRACULA***s that I intended to do. There was a Dracula Sherlock Holmes I wanted to do, there was a—y'know, Dracula in different—all throughout the five hundred years of existence. But I had come to that decision all too late to do that first issue.

SANDERSON: Okay, how did Lilith get created?

WOLFMAN: Well, first I don't remember who Lilith is—oh, Dracula's daughter. Roy came over and said Stan wants a daughter of Dracula, create it. That's how. I hated the concept, despised it with a passion, thought it was absolutely an awful idea, and then just tried to make it work, and tried to do something that since the way the storylines were progressing, this was for a separate series, 'cause ***DRACULA*** was doing so well at the time. I mean, it was outselling ***SPIDER-MAN*** in percentage. Just for a few months there, it was in the sixties, ***SPIDER-MAN*** was in the fifties—percentagewise, never copywise. They wanted to milk it in every way possible, so I just tried to make the story work, and come up with a character that would have some future potential, not just something that solved Stan's problem of having a ***"Lilith"*** series, but one that would fit into the whole concept that I was working with with the series, so I have no idea how I did it at this point—you come up with it. Like I came up with Blade, in an instant, and I came up with Harold H. Harold just in an instant, like the whole history existed without even trying to, how that tied in with Angel O'Hara, and her problem with her father, and how Lilith would react towards her father, and the mutual takeover of Angel and Lilith, and I have no idea where that came from, it just all appeared out of nowhere, it just sort of... boom.

SANDERSON: How about Blade, then, what was the impetus for him, and also for Hannibal King?

WOLFMAN: Blade... I had no intention of creating Blade, I had no intention of anything, he just popped into my head. In one step, walking down Main Street, Flushing, this is no joke. In one instant, the entire character, his costume, the look, his origin, and everything popped into my head, without my even expecting it to, because I'd only been on the book three issues at that point. Blade was in I think my fourth issue of ***DRACULA***, or maybe the third, I don't know. And everything about him I knew. Where he came from I don't know.

SANDERSON: And Hannibal King?

WOLFMAN: I wanted to do a detective story, since I was always trying to find different ways to do the series, and the biggest trouble in ***DRACULA*** was to find a new approach, so that it wasn't always standardized. Everything had to be, as far as I was concerned, different ways of telling the story, to keep the reader interested. I figured we were bucking the horror trend, which was waning, that the only way we were going to get anyone interested in this thing was to constantly keep it lively.

SANDERSON: So hence, by nature, it was sort of an experimental book.

WOLFMAN: It had to be. And it had to keep my interest. Since I wasn't at all naturally interested in horror stuff, I had to find ways to interest myself by doing different types of storylines, telling the point of view from different people, and I decided to do this detective story, but in that... the guy turned out to be a vampire.

SANDERSON: And narrated in this Raymond Chandler style.

WOLFMAN: Yeah, well, if you're going to do a detective story, you do it with all the corn of that stuff.

OF COURSE! THEY TRANSFERRED THE KIDNAPPED KIDS TO ONE VAN--NOW IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO TELL WHICH ONE WENT WHERE!
I'VE GOT TO CHECK IN WITH CHIEF MacDONALD--SEE IF HE HAS ANY LEADS...
"ROBIN, OF COURSE... I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER..."
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GILLIS: It really is rather remarkable that three of your most memorable stories are the father/son things, and you strip the thing down to the bare bones of the familial conflict. Dracula and Janus, Spider-Man and The Burglar, which is... not exactly a father figure, but it's still Oedipal, the killer of the good father...

WOLFMAN: I didn't think of that...

GILLIS: ...and Dr. Doom and his son.

WOLFMAN: Well, that was clear, and...

SANDERSON: And of course, all over the place in ***TEEN TITANS.***

WOLFMAN: Well, wait'll you see issue #11, and the second half of that one, if it isn't clear in that one it never will be.

GILLIS: The second half of the series with Wonder Girl and the Greek Titans?

WOLFMAN: Yeah, 'cause that comes down to basically the conflict between the father gods and the children gods.

SANDERSON: And of course, symbolically, it's also the old corrupt order and the new, younger, more vital order.

WOLFMAN: And that's what it's all about, and the convincing them that they have to go back to what they were, and just do the best they will, but it has to pass on, as they will pass on, sometime, to the next order. Maybe there's something screwy in my childhood, I don't know.

SANDERSON: It's a primal theme, and it runs through lots of comics, and lots of stories, in any medium.

WOLFMAN: I guess I... I never really went out of my way to think about that, obviously, when I was doing the Doctor Doom storylines, or the ***FF*** stuff, or even ***SPIDER-MAN***. It was very much a concern with me with ***DRACULA***. I couldn't accidentally stumble into it four or five times during that series, that was a thought. With ***THE TEEN TITANS***, it was a matter of choice, 'cause I realized I had the name "Teen" and I was stuck with it. I had to, as I've said before, make what I thought was the weakness of the book the strength. If you didn't play off of that, you would not have the book, I don't think. I think we would be a very third rate book if we just sort of like tried to forget that the word "teen" existed, and played them like they do The X-Men, you know, more adults.

SANDERSON: And so it is that you emphasize the relationship of all the characters with their real parents, or their father figures, like perhaps with Batman and Robin.

WOLFMAN: Yeah. Robin, of course, the least. I have no control over him. The other characters because, again, when I took over the book, that decision had to be made, since I couldn't get rid of the word "Teen," which is probably the best thing to have happened. Neal [Adams] has copyrighted the name The Titans as something for himself, so we had to do it as "***The Teen Titans,***" and the only way to make it work, then, was to do that, and once I realized that, the strength of the stories started developing on its own. Len was unaware of what I was doing—I think maybe in some places even I was to an extent. I knew obviously, Starfire and her parents, Raven and her father and mother, and Cyborg, but it started to develop once I realized that those relationships—the new characters, in a sense—the relationships with those characters, how it would affect, say, someone like Kid Flash, who's an ordinary, normal kid, and how his parents would react to that. We have Wonder Girl who has no parents, and we play off of that in issue #12, I guess. The situation with Gar Logan, who lost two sets of parents, and so on. As the series developed, and I realized what the strengths were, I was able to play off and reach for those. I think the climax of it really is the "***Gods***" two-parter, 'cause you can't restate that theme any stronger than I did there. Even the Gar Logan story that follows won't be as strong in the same respect, it'll be more of a super-hero clash. And then following that, there'll be the whole thing with Starfire's planet, in which, you'll have to eventually see that, and even meet her sister, who works for the Citadel, and will be against her.

SANDERSON: At the same time, though, that ***THE TEEN TITANS*** concentrates very much on the fact that these young people are the children of people, they are nevertheless very much acting in a very independent, adult fashion.

WOLFMAN: They're seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen years old.

THIS ALL SEEMS SO EASY! WE SHOULD BE GOING AFTER THEM.
TRUST ME, KORYPHI'S WE HAVE CYBORG.
YEAH. THIS PLACE IS AN AWESOME JAIL. BUT NOW, THEY'RE GONNA FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE OF US IS MISSING.
WELL, WE CAN'T WAIT TO BE ARRAIGNED. I HATE PAPERWORK.
BUT FIRST WE MUST ARRANGE! I SENSE THEIR POWER IS GREATER THAN OURS.
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SANDERSON: Yes. Wonder Girl has a job that you'd expect of somebody far older, but she's doing quite well in it, and you never see scenes of them at school.

WOLFMAN: You will soon. Wonder Girl's job is an art. You can get away with that. And an eighteen-year-old girl is not young. Look at most of the Playmates.

SANDERSON: She is legally in many ways an adult.

WOLFMAN: She is a complete adult. What she does for a living is not a business type of thing, it is an art. Therefore what is important is in her eye, her ability to convey what she wants as a photographer. It also allows her the freedom. Raven you will see in school—and Kid Flash, maybe, to some extent. Even though school is of vital importance to him in his terms, it's less important to the series to show it, because his relationships in school would be so ordinary, that no more than a panel or two would have to be shown. Raven's would be totally different, and therefore much more interesting to show. Starfire has no interest in school. She'll stay what she is. She'll get work if she wants, she won't do anything if she wants.

SANDERSON: All she has to do is kiss somebody, and she'll learn anything he knows.

WOLFMAN: She doesn't absorb, she just got the language that way. I'd like to sort of forget that that happened. But she doesn't absorb everything through that—otherwise she has a little Absorbascon inside her, from ***HAWKMAN.***

SANDERSON: Kiss and Tell... (laughter)

GILLIS: Would Beast... Changeling be the youngest of the group?

WOLFMAN: Yeah. He's seventeen. This is all just in our heads. It'll never be stated on paper. Let's see if I can remember this: Robin, Raven, and Cyborg are nineteen, I think; all the others are eighteen except Changeling who's seventeen. I think that's right.

SANDERSON: So how was ***THE NEW TEEN TITANS*** team created?

WOLFMAN: Okay. From beginning, to end. A lot of it is pretty much right out of what I said in the first issue of ***TEEN TITANS.*** Len and I wanted to do... a new ***TEEN TITANS.*** We had loved it before, we wanted it, and we both felt it would sell. Especially in the era of ***THE NEW X-MEN,*** which, don't forget, Len created, or co-created. I mean, he is forgotten, but he did do those first two issues, and he had a lot to do with the shaping of those characters. We wanted to do a new group. We did not want to do a nostalgia thing, just do the old group. As much as I like Bob Rozakis as a person, and as a writer of certain type of stories, I think a lot of what Bob writes in very nice, I thought the stuff he did on ***THE TEEN TITANS*** was not the best stuff that could have been done.

But we wanted to do it, and we discussed the possibility. Since we didn't want to do any of the new cast members that Bob had introduced, or whoever else was writing the book had introduced, it went back to the original team. Now, we didn't want Hawk and Dove, because that's a 1960s concept that should stay there. We didn't want Lilith. We didn't want Gnarrk, the caveman...

SANDERSON: Didn't want the new Guardian.

WOLFMAN: Didn't want the new Guardian, didn't want Speedy (because all he is is a second rate Robin)! We didn't want Aqualad, because that forces you into stories about water every hour. And it basically left us with a central cast of Kid Flash, Wonder Girl—who was my favorite anyway—and Robin. And that's also a good nucleus, because they're good characters—as much as I don't like Kid Flash's name. So we decided to create new ones. I came up with Cyborg, and Len came up with the idea of doing a mystic-type character. At first we though it ws going to be a man or whatever—we had no idea. I wanted #o do an alien. I also wanted to use Robby Reed. I thought that would make the book different than anything else; a character who was different every single time he appeared. And Len insisted upon the Beast Boy, who I hated, and I said I would only do if I could change his name. I said, "I'm going to use the name Changeling," and Len said, "Fine. Please. I don't like the name Beast Boy either. I just like the character." So Len said "Okay, come up with something for the mystic," and I really resisted that. I didn't want to do it, 'cause everything that he said sounded like The Phantom Stranger. And we played with names, played with concepts, finally decided on Raven as the name for the character. In my little chart, which I still have upstairs, I have a whole bunch of "star" names for the alien, and a whole bunch of names for possible Titans. I liked the name Raven. I had just used it in that comic strip I was trying to sell, and I was sort of put under the challenge of not making that character The Phantom Stranger, and not making it Dr. Strange. "Find a way of doing it." So that's how Raven got in—it was basically a challenge. As for Starfire: I wanted an alien. And I liked the idea of an alien girl teenager, who had been a slave for six years, submitted to every possible degradation in the world, totally demolished, in so many ways, and yet, is a complete innocent, in so many ways. I mean, her past is really wretched.

SANDERSON: It'll be interesting to see how she managed to keep this innocence, and in fact be so spunky and not be completely destroyed or totally vengeful.

WOLFMAN: It's. . . it has to be your character.

SANDERSON: Does Starfire have any debt to the Heinlein juvenile characters?

WOLFMAN: Outside of just some of the relationship with what happened to Thorby in ***CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY***—I think that was his name, no. That was not the original impetus—that was after I had realized what I'd set up, and remembered all of those times that he was on the ship, and on slave planet and stuff like that. That was after the fact, not first. There was just the idea of this girl who has gone through this, and yet still having that other type of personality, and having got the powers later, and then setting up this with the sister and stuff.

SANDERSON: Well, how is it that she's managed to keep an even-keeled personality? Apparently she does believe in killing enemies, but that seems to be part of background and society, not personal choice.

WOLFMAN: Also, that whole area . . . I wrote a whole long thing for Chris (Claremont), for the ***TEEN TITANS/X-MEN*** team-up tabloid, in which I said, "Basically, to understand Starfire's personality, understand the Japanese." The Samurai. Who can look at beauty one moment and chop off a head the next. Her hatred is totally towards her captors. They are vermin, and they must be destroyed. It is not towards anything else. She sees the beauty in nature, she was trained to. That is the value system of this entire planet, that's how they have this incredible paradise. And yet, they can be warlike. So it's the two sides, two natures of the personality. And the training that she had only brings it out.

SANDERSON: I expect with Raven that you got the idea for the costume from the name Raven—the bird look?

WOLFMAN: Her costume? I didn't get the idea at all. Len said, "Work a hood, and a thing." Raven is very much Len's concept; not what I've done with her, but her existence. He told George to create a hood; it had nothing to do with the bird hood, that was all George, and somehow connect the hood with the cape. I didn't understand what he was talking about; George did, took it home, and then just designed that magnificent costume. Simplicity, I mean, so easy, and so unlike anything else, because it's so simple. There's no interfering lines. I have the original sketches George did, and he had a belt under it, and he whited it out, to make it even simpler.

SANDERSON: I was thinking that the bird-like hood, and the bird-like astral image must have been inspired by her name.

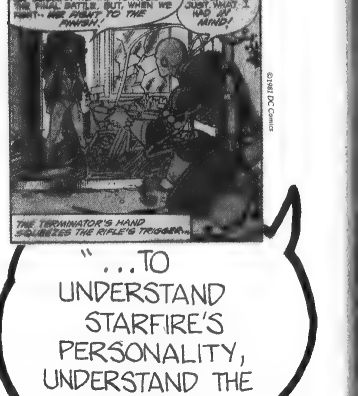
WOLFMAN: George took that from the name. We didn't give him any instructions on that. Len created the Soul Self as part of it, and I had no idea what to do with it, until I saw what George visually drew, so that character is very much a combination of Len and George and then all of the origin and all the concepts afterwards were mine. But the existence of Raven is theirs. I claim nothing on it. Cyborg was mine, very much, and Starfire was mine.

SANDERSON: And the idea with Cyborg, I suppose, was to get some kind of black into the team?

WOLFMAN: Well, we had wanted to do that all those years before. Len and I were joking, we were thinking about bringing back Jericho, and this time just having-him pop up into an issue or so, the original character saying, "I could have been here twelve years ago"(laughter), and then leave. But we wanted a black member, definitely, and I wanted a character who would change over the period of the first half dozen, dozen issues, from being very bitter because of his origin. We had a lot of trouble; not trouble, but a lot of negative mail, saying, "Aah, stereotype black, he's always angry," and stuff, and I said, "yeah, just hold on, don't worry, he'll change. I knew where he was going." You have to start him out one way to move him where you want him to go.

SANDERSON: When you got to Raven, it was interesting that she put this spell on Kid Flash, to make him love her, and she didn't realize until The Justice League and Titans pointed out to her that this was not the most moral thing to do. That was an interesting storyline.

WOLFMAN: This will come up again, in the Hyperion/Wonder Girl relationship. 'Cause he basically mesmerizes her as the gods did to mortals, and when she leaves at the end of issue #12, Raven says,


OH, WAHARAN WE TRY TO AVOID THE FINAL BATTLE, BUT, WHEN WE MUST... WE FIGHT TO THE FINISH!
BABE, THAT'S JUST WHAT I HAD IN MIND!
©1982 DC Comics
THE TERMINATOR'S HAND SQUEEZES THE RIFLE'S TRIGGER...
"...TO UNDERSTAND STARFIRE'S PERSONALITY, UNDERSTAND THE JAPANESE."

"I know what she's going through, it affects both parties. I've done this; I've never yet gotten over it myself." She has not forgotten it.

SANDERSON: But it also seems to indicate that she believes to a larger extent than the Earth heroes do, that the end can justify the means.

WOLFMAN: Well, she's broken free from that strange society of hers, the pacifistic ones. There are things that you develop later on. I may not have handled that sequence exactly the same. I would have handled the concept of it the same, knowing ten issues later, what I'm doing with the characters, but there are crudities in some of the early handling of Raven, things set up, I think wrong, wrongly. I would have had her react more to the reasoning that she did things with Kid Flash, had I thought them out then, as I have now, but that's issue #5 and 6, and now I'm on issue #14 or 13 or whatever, and I've gotten a better handle on the characters. I really came to understand the characters by issue #8, and I'm still learning with some of them.

SANDERSON: Do you intend the romance between Kid Flash and Raven to turn out to be real?

WOLFMAN: I don't think so. I don't think so.

SANDERSON: Because he still feels . . .

WOLFMAN: He feels he doesn't know where it is. She is actually attracted to him, as I said, that time; she has not yet gotten over what she has done, because the effect has to be on both parties. Where it's going I'm not quite sure right now. I've been purposely keeping them apart, for the current issues, and I've not yet made up my mind—I don't want to lock myself in too much. I want the freedom to, y'know, change my mind, and if I start locking myself in, I'm going to be doing the one thing I don't want to do,I don't

want to take the book more seriously than I should. If I start to treat it like the epic people are calling it, this "fan favorite," I'm going to lock myself into things that I don't want to do. I have to keep thinking of this as loosely and as freely as I possibly can, by not planning too far in advance as to what I'm doing.

SANDERSON: One thing about ***THE TITANS*** that probably would not have been done fifteen years ago is the fact that half the membership is female. Did this just come about without really thinking about it, or did you pay conscious attention—"yes, half the group is going to be made out of women." And it also seems to me that the female characters are the stronger ones than the men.

WOLFMAN: Yeah, it was something we actually knew we were doing, 'cause Starfire was originally—the name Starfire is on my chart, but that wasn't the present Starfire; we were going to bring back the Russian character, and there was going to be another alien in the book. It was very deliberately made into a female to equalize the membership. Also I just felt that it was about time. I've never had any reputation for writing women characters so I'd better learn to do it.

SANDERSON: But as I say, it seems to me, and wouldn't you agree with this, that the women characters, the women Titans are the strongest characters or the most strongly-presented characters. . .

WOLFMAN: They're the most interesting. Even though Wonder Girl hasn't been played up, she's my favorite character in the entire book. In your review of it, you thought exactly what my feelings of the character is—she knows what she's doing. She knows exactly what she's doing. She is usually in control of herself.

SANDERSON: It's the understatement, as you call it, that puts that across for me.

WOLFMAN: I had to do some work on it, because it hasn't gotten across to the readership. The general letters come in saying "You've got to do more with Wonder Girl. Explain her more." So now, she does indeed after the Hyperion thing, say to her mother, "For the first time I didn't feel in control, I didn't understand what was happening to me. Please help me, 'cause I don't understand." And she does go to her boyfriend, Terry, and needs him. I always felt, even back in the old days when she was a flake, that she should be the most secure of all the characters, because of her society. They're trained to be perfect—almost—they're Amazons. She wouldn't be the silly, flaky person that she was portrayed to be in the early ***TT*** comics. Y'know, saying "oh gee whiz," and falling in love with everybody at first sight. So it's just this one guy, and very serious.

SANDERSON: Does the amount of characterization that's in ***THE TEEN TITANS*** make it easier for you to write than, say, another super-hero book? One issue, of course, was devoted entirely to characterization sequences.

WOLFMAN: I sometimes think we put too much fighting in. I was so pleased with the mail on issue #8, that I feel less afraid now, to eliminate more fights, so that there would be more of a concentration on that. We're having an issue, soon, that will be a letter from Kid Flash to his parents. The whole issue is the letter, so . . .

SANDERSON: So once again you seem to be experimenting with format, as with ***DRACULA.***

WOLFMAN: That was deliberate. Roger Slifer mentioned to me at one point, someplace, he said, "Why haven't you ever been able to get the conceptions, and some of the things you'd been doing in ***DRACULA*** into your super-hero books?" And it started me thinking. One of the ways I figured to go about it was to try to do the experimentation. Why should I have only experimented with ***DRACULA***? I'm still in a learning process. I haven't done superheroes all my career. Daredevil was the first regular super-hero I had ever done. That's not that many years ago, and it was the only one I had done for a long time.

SANDERSON: Well, it seems to me that there's an awful lot of super-heroes and an awful lot of super-hero formula stories, and it makes sense to experiment.

WOLFMAN: Well, sometimes you don't see it. I would like someone—I'd love it to be me—to come in and revolutionize comics today, what Stan did twenty years ago. Sometimes you get so close to the stuff you don't think about it, and I think that having Roger, sort of just bringing that to my attention made me think, "Yeah, I knew that I never put the same type of thinking into the book, and I have a book here, and I have an artist who can do the stuff." (I didn't realize how strong George was with faces until issue #8, y'know, and subtleties of emotion. George has always had the reputation of being primarily an action person).

SANDERSON: I found I liked his scenes with the characters, with real people,much better than I liked the action scenes, strangely enough.

WOLFMAN: Well, George and I were talking about that issue, and he did too. And he says he's gotten more into doing the other type of stuff, the more human stuff. And when you know the artist is in sync with you, and is also someone capable of doing that material, you suddenly feel the freedom to do it. With Gene Colan, I knew the thing that Gene was real strong at, besides mood, was people. I mean, he draws the best faces in the business. So you're going to do the type of storylines that play off of that. Now that I know George can do that, we can get really heavy into some of that stuff.

SANDERSON: And Perez is now co-plotting the issues with you.

WOLFMAN: George totally co-plotted issues #6 and 8 with me, I mean, we sat down together. I plotted all the other issues. George takes those, and does whatever he feels like. He is the first artist and the only artist I've ever worked with that has total freedom to take whatever plot I do, and change it without even calling me. That's how much faith I have in his stuff. I've never worked with another artist who's had the explicit freedom to do that. He has never made a mistake about what he's chosen—in fact, he's fixed up things. So even though I've plotted every single issue—I mean he doesn't change things to any great extent; what he'll do is repace it, cut things out, totally change fights. I mean,

"[WONDER GIRL WAS] TRAINED TO BE PERFECT."
INTERCEPTING? OUT THERE, BUT— AHOY! DO YOU SEE IT, DAUGHTER?
I DO, MOTHER, ALTHOUGH IT'S SO FAINT. IT'S A SPACECRAFT— OF A MAN?— FLYING BEFORE THE SUN!
IS IT POSSIBLE?
IT IS THERE!
©1981 DC Comics

he designs much better fights than I do, but my plots are very very tight and very precise. They're five pages single spaced, sometimes six pages single spaced, of every single page, including the fights, which I know he's going to change. But because he makes as many changes, and restructures, he's the co-plotter for the book. I would love him to have the time to sit down again as we did with issue #6 and #8, and really co-plot, in the traditional co-plotting style. But until he feels that he does have that time again, the way we're working will be fine. I'll get him the plots and let him have free rein over them.

SANDERSON: Since ***TITANS*** obviously is influenced by the Marvel style...

WOLFMAN: Without a doubt, the early Marvel style.

SANDERSON: The early Marvel style. You said, on occasion, that you felt the DC and Marvel styles were getting too similar these days.

WOLFMAN: Well, that's fortunate. Marvel's changing to such a degree, now, that I think we'll be unique. We have all the Marvel writers, anyway, but that's being facetious. I don't think ***THE TEEN TITANS*** is a book that Marvel would have produced. I don't think the type of stories I'm doing are necessarily Marvel stories, I think Marvel influenced it—the interest in the characterization, the dynamics, certainly, I mean, George's stuff, and the intensity. I think there's also some DC influence in there too, because I've always had a DC influence.

SANDERSON: Which would come out how?

WOLFMAN: In the structure of the story, the type of stories I go for, and stuff. But then again, I disagreed with so much of the early DC, or the middle-ground DC stuff, that I don't see any reason to follow the more boring aspects of, say, what one would consider a DC story. I hate thinking that a DC story is basically considered dull, whereas a DC story technically is one that has a heavy plot. I can plot heavy. I've been doing that in ***"Superman,"*** but ***THE TITANS*** is a different type of book. I don't want that to be a heavy plot book, I want that to be much more heavy in characterization, but I want definite plots. I think sometimes ***THE X-MEN*** doesn't, that's the one disagreement I have with Chris. He'll do a nine-issue story with something I'll do in two issues, because really, most of these plots aren't that original. I've always had that feeling, at least in comics. Most plots you've seen, so the only thing you do have to play off of is your characters, and no use expanding it. It worked for awhile, but how many issues could you have The Hellfire Club, say, or some of that other stuff?

SANDERSON: What do you think of, say, comic books today, compared to what they were, say, ten years ago? And what do you think of the future of the super-hero genre in comics?

WOLFMAN: Basically, I feel the books aren't as creative as they were ten years ago. There are several reasons for that, but I'll get back to that. I don't think the books are as well produced. I don't think as much thought goes into the books as as they did. I think the craft and the art is a lot higher, though. I don't think there's many who are as good as Jack Kirby, say, or Steve Ditko when he was doing his best, as far as being a plotting, thinking artist. Frank Miller comes to mind. George does. I think George does work very similar to what Jack used to do, on some of the ***FFs*** that Stan had a heavy plot hand in. Walt Simonson and a few others come to mind as well. But most of the industry I just don't feel has the same sense of story structure that the earlier writers had. Stan was really a very good writer. I mean, his personality aside—which the fans have been jumping on for the past few years (which is all showbiz, and he knows it)—this is something he went out to create.

SANDERSON: Well, it's also that, as more and more comes out about the extent to which his artists plotted stories, that people are beginning to belittle Stan.

WOLFMAN: But, you know, Steve Ditko always had plotting credit on ***SPIDER-MAN***, or had it for all the issues people remember. Stan was writing 300 pages a month. The fastest writer today is Gerry Conway. I think he writes 120. Roy Thomas writes about 100, I write 85. There's very few who write more than me. Just very few. Stan was writing 300 pages. What difference is it that he was smart enough as an editor to let Jack Kirby have free rein? See, my view of Stan is, that he was almost more important at Marvel as an editor than he was a writer. As an editor, he made the decision to write it all himself because it was easier than correcting everyone else. That's an editor's decision. He could have been just as happy not spending every night writing—I'm sure his wife would have been a lot happier, too. But Stan's dialogue made ***SPIDER-MAN*** come to life. He and Steve did not talk for the last two years of their relationship—they were not friends, at that particular time—yet Stan took Steve's pictures and plot, which he didn't even understand, and turned them into good stories. And Steve had the foresight to create the good story in the first place. As an editor, Stan gave his people the latitude and the freedom to create that material. I mean, before Jack Kirby did Asgard, and The People Breeders, and The Inhumans, and The Silver Surfer, nothing like that had ever been done in comics! And yet, it flourished under Stan. Stan the writer or Stan the editor, it doesn't matter. That's why I think nothing today is as creative. We're all still milking off of Stan's stuff, in many ways. There are individual books that break the mold. I think Doug Moench does, in ***MASTER OF KUNG FU.*** Frank Miller is doing movies; he's not really doing comics, he's doing much more of a movie-type thing, even approaching, to some extent, a Marvel version of a Will Eisner type of storytelling. I think ***DRACULA*** broke free of that mold, though it was very much a Marvel comic. I think, because we're stuck in a super-hero society today, with the comic books, the

REMEMBER, BOB! DON'T LET GO OF THAT LEVER FOR ANY REASON, NO MATTER WHAT!
THERE CAN BE NO TURNING BACK NOW! ONCE I PUSH THIS LEVER THE PLUGS—WHY, MECHANISM WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY ACTIVATED! IT SHOULD BE ABOUT NO MATTER WHAT!
BANG!
I'VE DONE IT! THE UNIVERSE IS ABOUT TO BE DESTROYED! I FEEL OPEN-FALLING AWAY!
I'VE SURVIVED THE END OF THE UNIVERSE! I'VE BEEN SUCKED INTO THE FUTURE! TRANSPORTED INTO ANOTHER DIMENSION! WHO KNOWS WHERE I'VE LANDED!
AND NOW—THE PLUGS! THE REVOLUTIONARY DEVICE WHICH I'VE CREATED! THE MACHINE-BREAKING DEVICE!
©1982 Marvel Comics Group

"I DON'T THINK THERE'S MANY WHO ARE AS GOOD AS JACK KIRBY..."

stuff just isn't as creative. I ran into a big argument obviously, at Creation Con on that, because one of the editors at Marvel disagreed, and thought comics were better than ever. I'm sorry, I don't. I think there are very good comics being produced today, but I can't remember a time when I enjoyed comics more than when Stan, Jack and Steve were doing those ***THOR***s and ***FF***s and ***SPIDEY***s and at the same time or within a year or two after, DC had ***"Deadman"*** and ***THE CREEPER***, ***BAT LASH***, ***ANTHRO***, and there was all different sorts of stuff, all of them beautifully done, and today we basically have 5,000 super-heroes and very little difference between them.

SANDERSON: I understand you've said that you think that the super-hero trend is going to die down.

WOLFMAN: I think it's been artificially extended—the artificial extension being interest in the ***SUPERMAN*** movie, the ***HULK*** TV show, and an occasional really bright item—but I look at the sales charts, and I just think that there's going to be a tiring of the super-heroes. There always has been, and the last one struck right after the ***BATMAN*** TV show fad died, and my God, the companies were hysterical.

SANDERSON: And of course the sales were higher then than they are now.

WOLFMAN: Yeah. Everything was always higher. The readership is coming down to the level of producing exactly what the fans want, because the fans will be the only ones buying it pretty soon. But I think that we're going to start having to do other types of books, because I don't think you can keep doing super-heroes endlessly. The fans have got to get tired of them sometime. They always have in the past, and that's the only reason I think that. I think we're going to have to start experimenting with other types of books now, and other looks. You may be able to find ways to adapt the super-hero; ***DRACULA*** was very much an adaptation of the super-hero into horror. Up until then, horror books were always individual short stories, but Roy—under Roy's guidance, it was taking what Marvel did best, characters, and turning them into horror books. So that's why I figure that it's going to have to be that way, I think super-heroes will have to wane. The comic book shops may keep them alive, I don't know. I hope not. I would like to see fewer super-heroes and more experimentation. I keep wanting to do anything else.

"I LIKE COMIC STRIPS VERY MUCH."
WHAT A GREAT PLACE TO FILM EXORCIST 3!
MARTA'S BEEN ON THE VERGE OF UPSTAGING EVER SINCE!
WOLFMAN ADAMS/ESPOSITO
©1982 Marv Wolfman and Ernie Colón

SANDERSON: Now, apart from the mystery books, the first thing you wrote at DC was ***BLACKHAWK***. Why do you love ***BLACKHAWK*** so much?

WOLFMAN: I don't know. It must have been a kid's dream or something. I was too young to remember the Quality ***BLACKHAWK***s. (I mean that in both company and concept.) The DC ***BLACKHAWK***s were always bad, yet there was something about the group I always liked. I don't know what it is. I'm sure that's a psychiatric problem back there someplace, but I always liked the strip's concepts. When I saw the Quality issues, I realized how good these people really were. That's why I tried to get them back as the original Blackhawks. Now I'm doing them again, and they're set back in World War II, which is the only place a bunch of military fascists could exist. It's WWII's ***"Blackhawk"*** stories with the Korean War super-weapons. I loved the Korean War ***BLACKHAWK***s. The Communists—or Commies, they all were Commies back then—would come up with these magnificent weapons: The War Wheel, the Flying Tank, whatever—they'd come up with all these great things, and the only way The Blackhawks, the American Heroes, could stop the War Wheel was to sink it in quicksand. We had no brains, but we were really brawny. Great, stupid stories—I just loved it.

SANDERSON: I take it, then, that since your ***BLACKHAWK*** is set back in WWII, that the last ***BLACKHAWK***, of the 1970s, does not exist.

WOLFMAN: Mopee created all those stories, also. (Laughter) The Blackhawks are characters that should only exist in wartime. They can't function in any other setting. They'd be mercenaries.

SANDERSON: Which is what they were in their last incarnation, apart from being surprisingly young.

WOLFMAN: They worked in war because they are a military organization. To say they're anything else is a mistake. That's the way I see things. And since I'm writing the strip, the way I see things is the way it's going. (Laughs)

SANDERSON: Now, apart from comics, you've worked in comic strips, novels, and even treatments for television. What's that like? Are there differences? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

WOLFMAN: I like comic strips very much. You wouldn't know that from ***HOWARD THE DUCK***. On ***HOWARD THE DUCK*** I was asked to do a gag-a-day strip. I'm not a gag writer. I can write comedy, I'm a good comedy writer, but I can't write gags, which is somewhat different, and it was a case of the wrong person being asked to write the wrong strip at the wrong time, simply (I think) because of speed. I mean, Steve Gerber was four days ahead of press schedule. Four ***days***. And we had to turn over three Sundays in a weekend, and I didn't even know what my story was, and yet we had to do three Sundays within a story, and somehow it all got done. We had three days to do this in. Stan called me in after the second story, because he had read it all, and says (cheerful tone); "Hi Marv! This is the worst piece of crap I've ever read in my entire life." And I didn't get offended, because as I say, Stan had this way about him. You just can't get offended when Stan talks to you—and he was right. It was written at breakneck speed, because of the deadlines and stuff, but when it comes out, you can't expect someone else to know that. You can't apologize; you hope that people understand, or certainly someone like Stan, he said, "Also, why are you doing gag-a-day?" "That's what the syndicate told me to do." "Okay, from now on, I'm your boss on the strip." I said, "As long as I have **one** boss, I don't care. Just tell me who I listen to. The first time you said do whatever Denny Allen at the syndicate said, he wanted gag-a-day. If you're my boss now, tell me what you want." He said, "I want it straighter." The very next daily I wrote, it became straight. In the middle of the storyline. I mean, you know, that's what you do, if that's what you're told. I like the strip format very much. I loved working on ***THE UNEXPLAINED***. I'm real sorry that we couldn't sell it to enough papers. We did sell it, to the syndicate; I mean to **two** syndicates, we sold it to.

SANDERSON: Describe it for us.

©1981 Marv Wolfman and Ross Andru
HEE-HI-HAU! XEH' HU-HAU! KRAKS! MALDEC-TOR-MU!
HE'S DELIRIOUS, BUT THERE'S NO SIGN OF FEVER!
PLEASE, DOCTOR WINTERS -- YOU'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!
NOW IT'S OVER. WHAT-EVER RAVAGED HIS BODY A MOMENT AGO -- IT'S GONE!
IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS FOR DAYS. I'VE BEEN SO FRIGHTENED!
WOLFMAN ANDRU ESPOSITO
RAVEN. HE NEEDS A HEAD-SHRINKER, NOT A PARA-PSYCHOLOGIST!
YOU'RE WRONG, DAVE -- WHAT-EVER IS AILING BEN KABTLE IT'S REAL --
-- AND VERY DANGEROUS!

"THEY SAID [*THE UNEXPLAINED*] ...WOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD BY THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE OUT THERE."

WOLFMAN: Ross Andru, Mike Esposito and I created a strip which was about a female teacher, parapsychologist at a university, in a Boston-like community, who would investigate the unexplained phenomena. And we did three weeks of Sundays of the strip, and I was real proud of it. I thought Ross did a magnificent job, and we called The Daily News, and said, "we'd like to bring up our strip to you," and we go up there, show it to them, and they said, "Okay, would you like a contract?" and we said, "Huh?" I swear to you, we said "Huh?" I mean, we figured we'd go up to The Daily News because they were in the area, and we'd get turned down there, and we'd go to the next syndicate, and within ten minutes of showing it to them: "Okay, we'll do the contracts up now." I mean, this isn't the way it's supposed to go.

SANDERSON: It's notably hard to sell continuity strips.

WOLFMAN: This isn't the way you do things like this! So I said "Okay," they gave us a check—we didn't sign a contract at that point—told us to do a Sunday. The check paid for everything. They were paying for us to do a Sunday, and by comic book rates, that check that they paid us to do just that one Sunday strip paid for everything—the three weeks we had done. That shows you the difference in wages, okay? We did the Sunday, brought it in, they brought it down to their sales people. The sales people nixed it. They said that it would go over the heads of the editors, and would not be understood by the majority of people out there. (This was just about the time of ***STAR WARS*** and people were not into fantasy yet.) The three-week sample we gave looked like it could've been an ***EXORCIST***-like story that turns into a science-fiction story. It was actually a science fiction story set-up. So we submitted it then, to King Features which has a penchant for disliking adventure strips totally. The result we got from King Features was, Sylvan Beck said, "This is a real good strip. I read it twice. We won't buy it, because we don't want adventure strips." And we said, "Okay"...

SANDERSON: Prince Valiant must be getting worried at this point.

WOLFMAN: No, these are old ones, so that doesn't matter. But they won't take new ones. But he read it twice, and liked it. We brought it to United Features, who thought it was absolutely lovely but it could never be sold, we brought it to . . .ah. . . it's in Detroit ...they're the next biggest one. What's the name?

(Wolfman, Sanderson and Gillis try to remember the name of this syndicate, and fail.)

Whatever. We brought it there. They held onto it for like five months. It finally got down to a choice between us and ***LATIGO***. And they had to make the choice and they went with ***LATIGO***, because of Stan Lynde's past record. They should have gone with us since he got off the strip within a year. But they held onto it, and they had like, I think they said 40 strips, and it just narrowed down to our two. So here we are, y'know, we're going through every single syndicate; we finally found a syndicate out on the West Coast that wanted it, loved it, promoted it, did everything they could, and I have copies upstairs if you want it—black and white ***and*** color, and they couldn't sell it to enough papers to make it worthwhile for Ross and me. It was sold, but a hundred dollars or two hundred dollars wasn't enough to pay our way, especially since Ross is so slow. He's so meticulous but slow. But I loved working on it.

SANDERSON: So you did the ***SPIDER-MAN*** and ***FF*** novels.

WOLFMAN: Stan asked Len to do the ***SPIDER-MAN*** novel, he was the writer of ***SPIDER-MAN*** at the time, and Len asked me to help him out, so the two of us wrote that, basically, we worked out the plot together, I did a first draft, he did a second draft, that's how we work together. Then they asked us to do the ***HULK*** novel and Len got sick, for something like five months. He was really sick, and finally we had to farm that out, to Ron Goulart. We rewrote all the Hulk copy, and wrote the last 40 pages, 'cause the book was too short. The pay was real nothing. Then they asked us to write more, and we said no, at that rate. It was ridiculous, it was like two thousand dollars, or something. Was it fifteen hundred? Yeah, fifteen hundred, that was it. And that had to be split between two people, so you really don't make money. So we said no, they got some other writer, and they called us frantically when they got the book back, and said, "Please take it, we'll go for whatever rate you want," and we signed a contract for the next nine. Because they came back to us so late, we had to get a novel out immediately. So we gave one to Ron Goulart to write, and one to me, and we were afraid that Ron wouldn't meet his deadline, which was two weeks, was all he had on the book. So just to cover

it, I wrote the ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** novel in eight days, just in case he didn't make his. He had his, and I made mine, and they got two books right away, and then we decided not to write the rest, so we acted as plotters, and editors, and rewriters.

SANDERSON: So everybody who did one of the novels worked from your plots.

WOLFMAN: Yeah. To one extent or another. Some of them were plotted in great detail, like the stuff we did for Ron Goulart, we did in total detail.

SANDERSON: Shooter?

WOLFMAN: Oh, no. Except on that one. 'Cause that was the only one that we could get Marvel people on, so we didn't have to plot it for them.

SANDERSON: Oh, Mary Jo said that she had done the plotting on ***THE X-MEN*** novelette.

WOLFMAN: Yeah.

SANDERSON: And what's it like writing screenplays, teleplays? The ones you can talk about.

WOLFMAN: I haven't really done that. All I've done is do treatments, and that's not difficult at all, that's basically the same thing as you'd write for a comic book; who the characters are, what they're about, and stuff of that sort, and basically doing it in zingy prose, since it's going to network people who want to be entertained; I don't think they're really concerned with plot.

SANDERSON: And what have you done that for, that you can talk about?

WOLFMAN: Jenette had me do one each for ***THE TEEN TITANS*** and ***"Dial H for Hero"*** which we submitted, and the network liked both of the things that we did. I don't know if it'll go as TV shows, I still don't know, but they really liked the treatments. And what I was so appreciative of towards Jenette—because I've never heard of this being done before in the business—was that she gets to go see the head of ABC-TV, and she invites Len and me to go along with her, as creators of the book. I've never heard of a person doing that—bringing in the comic book creators. Stan never did, certainly. And she's always been so open about it—she seems to appreciate our enthusiasm for the stuff, and I think she felt that our enthusiasm would come through to the network, since she already knew that we had a good product, and the people at ABC really like it. They weren't able to go, I think, with ***"Dial H"*** for schedule reasons; they tested ***"Dial H"*** at ABC—it came in fourth, I believe, of sixteen projects.

SANDERSON: How do you test it?

WOLFMAN: Three hundred kids. They tested the concept.

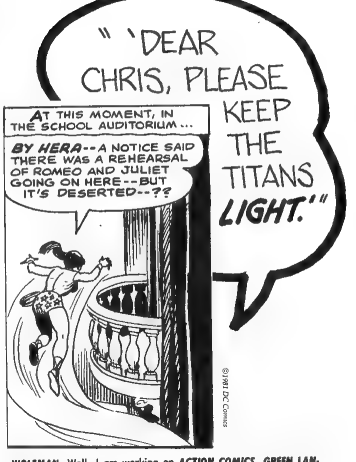
SANDERSON: Well, the concept is not the same as seeing the show.

WOLFMAN: No. But they have to test it. When that much money is spent they test every element on it. They show them artwork, they talk about story. "How would you like this?" It was up against ***LAVERNE AND SHIRLEY***, which came in first, for obvious reasons, and then two others that rated within a percentage point of us and others that rated way below, so we were really way up there, considering. If ABC had bad shows last season, we probably would have been picked up by them, but they renewed almost everything, so they weren't in trouble. I have no idea what the future is.

SANDERSON: And you are consulting closely on the upcoming ***TEEN TITANS/X-MEN*** team up book?

WOLFMAN: I wrote seven or eight pages of notes for Chris about who all The X-Men...er...maybe I should tell him who The X-Men are, too. (Laughter) "Hey, Chris, remember they're foreign, keep 'em with accents!"...who The Titans are, and I think I'm going to send him another line: "Dear Chris, please keep The Titans ***light***. They are not heavy characters. Don't have them thinking a lot of heavy dramatic thoughts. Keep them light. They are teenagers. Big difference between them and X-Men." I intend basically to sit on it, if I could. I mean, legally I can't, because it's a Marvel production, but I think Chris won't mind my looking at it, and maybe discussing plot or whatever. Since I'm not on staff at DC, that's not collusion.

SANDERSON: What are your future plans for work at DC?


" 'DEAR CHRIS, PLEASE KEEP THE TITANS LIGHT.'"
AT THIS MOMENT, IN THE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM...
BY HERA--A NOTICE SAID THERE WAS A REHEARSAL OF ROMEO AND JULIET GOING ON HERE--BUT IT'S DESERTED--??
©1981 DC Comics

WOLFMAN: Well, I am working on ***ACTION COMICS, GREEN LANTERN,*** and ***TITANS*** regularly, having just given up ***"Dial 'H' for Hero."*** I will be doing, along with Len Wein, a twelve-part series that will set all continuity at DC straight for the first time.

SANDERSON: This is impossible. How?

WOLFMAN: We are going to establish what's real and what's not.

SANDERSON: My God, can you tell us what this is about?

WOLFMAN: We haven't worked it out; we've got the "go ahead" to do this, as a special project. They like the idea, something I came up with in Philadelphia, based on a letter that was sent to me on the ***"Space Ranger"*** issues of ***GREEN LANTERN***, saying, "Ah, I noticed that it takes place in Komandi's timeline,"...

SANDERSON: References to The Great Disaster, and...

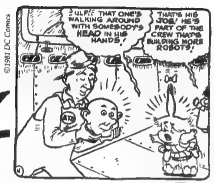
WOLFMAN: Yeah. And I just mentioned, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could get all these different timelines and everything worked out, and all this nonsense," as part of my answer, and mentioned it to Len and Joe Staton, the other two guests at Philly, and we started to develop this thing, "Wouldn't it be neat if...?", "Wouldn't it be great...?", starting with Amthro, and going all the way to The Future Green Lanterns? ***THE HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE.***

(Sanderson points out that Abra Kadabra's 64th Century is later than The Future Green Lanterns' 58th.)

Taking it from the very first DC concept to the very last, dealing with everything, saying what does exist and what doesn't, making fans happy and making fans mad. We might have to say, "I'm sorry, but ***"Atomic Knights"*** does not exist within regular DC continuity."

SANDERSON: Even though it's used in ***HERCULES UNBOUND***, and all that?

WOLFMAN: We can't use it, because that means in three years the planet's destroyed. What we are going to do—what our intention is


©1991 DC Comics
2 WAIT! THAT ONE'S WALKING AROUND WITH SOMEBODY'S HEAD IN HIS HANDS!
THAT'S HIS JOB! HE'S PART OF THE CREW THAT'S BUILDING MORE ROBOTS!
"WE ARE PUBLISHING FICTION, AND SOME FICTION IS WITHIN TIMELINES ...OTHER BOOKS ARE NOT."

—is to sit down with all the major writers (that's all the writers on the major books) decide, between them and the editors, what we will accept for the future, as our "givens." We will also make it very clear to the readers that "this is comic books." That means we can publish stories that are not in our time lines. We can do **"The Atomic Knights"** because it is a good idea and a good series. There's nothing wrong with **"The Atomic Knights."** We can do a bad series, like ***PREZ***, and not have to admit that it exists within the DC Universe. But there's nothing wrong with doing stories outside a given timeline. These books, the super-hero books as outlined in this twelve-part series—or however many months it takes—exist within a timeline. That doesn't mean everything has to. And if we want to say that **"The Atomic Knights"** doesn't exist, and ***KAMANDI*** does, fine. If we want to say where Wonder Woman of Earth-One and Earth-Two separate, that's fine. If we want to get rid of Earth-Two, we may make that decision.

SANDERSON: Whoa! That's really...

WOLFMAN: We have no idea. All we did was get the okay to do this, and the guarantee that we have six issues finished, inked and everything, before they even schedule the first one, so that we don't have to rush anything.

SANDERSON: And it will be official DC policy, that everyone has to abide by the conclusions in this series?

WOLFMAN: It will be basically the DC Bible, as Joe Orlando put it. We won't do anything that will affect any of the editors right now, we will not make any changes—what we will simply do is say, "These things are within timeline, these things..."—we won't even say what's not. We'll only be dealing with things that are in timeline, and mentioning everything that is within the timeline.

SANDERSON: But by extension you are going to be saying that some periods of some books did not happen, say that there are ***BLACKHAWK*** years that were published but did not happen in this timeline.

WOLFMAN: Precisely. And that will anger some people, but that is not our problem. We are publishing ***fiction***, and some fiction is within timelines—Heinlein published a timeline for certain of his books, whereas certain of his other books are not within that timeline.

SANDERSON: I totally agree. Would this also straighten out the DC/Marvel crossovers? Because if you're going to do a complete history of DC-Earth, and if DC characters and Marvel characters live on the same Earth, you've got to do it with The Celestials and all that—you can't do that.

WOLFMAN: I don't think that we can deal with that; we just have to assume that since this is fiction, this is not within the timelines we are setting up, and I see no reason that we have to admit that every single ***STRANGE ADVENTURE*** story that the Earth explodes is real. There's nothing wrong with fiction. We're dealing with total fiction, so we just have to admit it, and from that point on, there is nothing that can't be within that framework; we are not going to make any statements that says Superman's of a certain thing that can't be played around with, nor does that stop people from going beyond or before Kamandi, before Anthro and beyond Abra Kadabra, or any time within, but if they know it's within, between this year and this year is the Great Disaster, so if you're going to do a story, make sure you know, between this year and this year is the Great Disaster.

SANDERSON: Actually I believe DC has two official future histories, one leading to The Legion, one leading to Kamandi.

WOLFMAN: Yeah. We may find a way of organizing that, and if for instance, the Kamandi Great Disaster is only a thousand years, The Legion is still several thousand years beyond that. Even if it's two hundred years, that's plenty of time.

It will take several months to research everything, because we actually intend to go through every bound volume DC has—their full collection—deciding what we want to accept, deciding what we won't, checking with people like Roy and Gerry—specifically Roy, actually, 'cause he's the most continuity-crazy person up there.

SANDERSON: Apart from Bridwell. Do you think it's likely that you'll be merging Earth-One and Earth-Two, and maybe even throwing in Earth-Fawcett?

WOLFMAN: I don't think we can throw in Earth-Fawcett, because I think they have to pay every time they use a character from Earth-Fawcett, but I'm sure we'll use them within the story, because they won't mind that. Whether or not we merge Earth-One and Earth-Two, I have no idea. If too many editors, or too many writers cannot make that work—for instance, what do we do with all those heroes? We don't want two Supermans on Earth.

SANDERSON: It wouldn't be merging them in the sense of the old Gerry Conway theory that you can just crash them into each other, it would be a decision, that okay, from now on, all these heroes live on the same Earth, and we write out the duplicates.

WOLFMAN: Well, Roy's essentially done that for Earth-Two. All the Quality heroes have always lived on Earth-Two. They not only live on Earth-X, but there is another set on Earth-Two, they just never met.

SANDERSON: Not to mention the Blackhawks and Plastic Man also being on Earth-One—it does get confusing...

WOLFMAN: Yeah, so we have a hard job ahead of us, and everyone up there knows it, who's been told about the project. In fact, at one point down the line, I don't know if we've done this yet, I was trying to convince somebody that we should advertise that we are doing this, while Len and I are doing the research, in all the fanzines, suggesting that the readers submit ideas, on how things exist, how things don't, because we're actually looking for all the help to make it all work. It's too hard for two people to do. Some writers will care, too. Roy has given his wholehearted support, and says that if we weren't writing it, he'd love to write it. We may indeed let him write up the chapters on Earth-Two. I don't know yet. It all depends how we set this up as a book, and what the continuity is. It's not just an encyclopedia.

SANDERSON: Are there any series concepts for new series that you have for the future that you can tell us about?

WOLFMAN: I'm trying to push a new series idea with Gene, to do with Gene. It won't be Dracula, unfortunately.

SANDERSON: But it would be mystery or supernatural?

WOLFMAN: Yeah, I would like that. I would like to create a ***NEW CHAL-***

LENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN to the extent that I created a ***NEW TEEN TITANS***, and make it a pure mystery/horror book, featuring, not a super-hero version of it, but like the first half-dozen issues in which there were adventures, and into horror, very specifically, and... what else? I have no idea if The Omega Men are going to go anywhere. That's always a possibility, though I don't know if I want to do it as a series. I don't know, I'm just so busy with ***THE TITANS***, y'know, that DC's 27 pages, it really takes a lot longer, and doing three series is enough. Julie's been after me. I'm supposed to do a ***"Superman of Earth-One meets a Superman of Earth-Two"*** story, coming up as soon as I get a free moment.

SANDERSON: How are you going to do that? Is the Superman of Earth-Two going to be the original "a-bursting-shell-can-hurt-his-skin" version.

WOLFMAN: That's what has taken so long—a year or so to date—because that's my version of Superman of Earth-Two. Nelson believes otherwise. I think we'll just have to put Nelson and me in a room and see who comes out alive. I have been taking boxing lessons, so, I don't know. I would like Superman of Earth-Two to be the guy who could leap a sixth of a mile, and be knocked back by shells, because I think there should be a major difference between the two characters. The two Loises will be in there, and the two Luthors will be in there. I'm also supposed to be doing for next year—hopefully George—a crossover that begins in ***BRAVE & BOLD*** (***"Batman and The Teen Titans"***), moves over to ***WORLD'S FINEST*** (***"Batman and Superman and The Teen Titans"***), and moves over to ***DC PRESENTS*** (***"Superman and The Teen Titans"***), and all in one month. It's only 50 pages, if you take what their current sizes are, the stories—or 52 pages, now that it's larger, or something. But that's scheduled also for next year. Since both Julie and Dick have been pushing me to do Superman/Batman teamups, we figured we could go all the way, and make it one big month—overdose on The Teen Titans for one month. We missed out doing ***THE TEEN TITANS ANNUAL***—the first new annual in ages—simply because we didn't have the time. Otherwise we would have done it, but neither George nor I had a free month.

SANDERSON: I suppose eventually The Teen Titans will be involved in a Justice League/Justice Society crossover.

WOLFMAN: I am currently fighting the use of The Teen Titans everywhere. I would like to have it in such a way that nobody but me handles The Titans, until every Titan is so fully understood by every writer who would possibly write it, that there would be no mistake. Starfire's origin hasn't been given yet. Wonder Girl's identity hasn't been given yet. I don't want the characters being diluted all over the place. I figure by doing that crossover next year myself, with George, that should put a hold on teaming The Teen Titans up with everybody. Just because it's now outselling everything at DC is no reason to exploit it too much. They are DC's biggest seller now, and I think have officially outsold ***SUPERMAN***, I'm not sure.

SANDERSON: Is that just specialty shops or all over?

WOLFMAN: Everything.

SANDERSON: Well, congratulations.

WOLFMAN: I think it was issue #8 that outsold ***SUPERMAN***, in copies, so it's their biggest seller. We've been two or three to one over everything in direct sales, too.

SANDERSON: And how long do you expect to continue in comics?

WOLFMAN: I have no objections at this point to sticking in comics forever as long as I do other stuff as well. If I stay in comics and only do comics I will stagnate. I would like to do television, I would like to do movies, I would like to do novels. I have several novel ideas—I hope they're novel ideas—or ideas for novels that are so atypical of comic books, that have nothing to do with either science fiction, fantasy, or anything of that sort, and that's what I'd like to do as well. You have to reach out—otherwise you're writing dialogue like, "He's stronger than I thought he was" all the time. You go crazy. It's the reason I'm sorry I'm only on super-heroes now, because even that stagnates you. There's no way to reach out, do a different type of product.

SANDERSON: Okay. That's all I've got. Okay, thank you, Mr. President.

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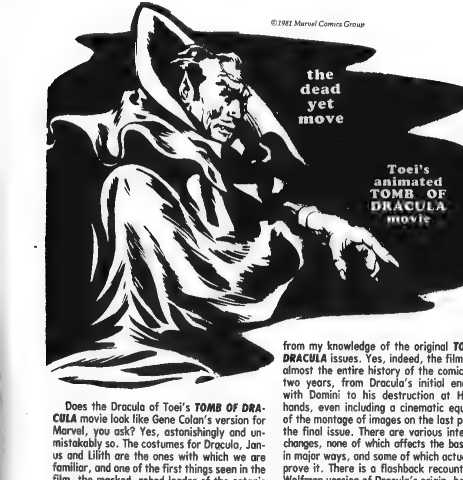

by Peter Sanderson

Does the Dracula of Toei's ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** movie look like Gene Colan's version for Marvel, you ask? Yes, astonishingly and unmistakably so. The costumes for Dracula, Janus and Lilith are the ones with which we are familiar, and one of the first things seen in the film, the masked, robed leader of the satanic coven, looks exactly like one of Colan's depictions of him come to life. The film's Satan seems to be a synthesis of Colan's Satan from the ***DRACULA*** series, Jack Kirby's muscular, long-horned Surtur from ***THOR,*** and, as Marv Wolfman points out, the great devil of the ***"Night on Bald Mountain"*** sequence from Disney's ***FANTASIA.***

There is none of the particularly Japanese stylization of faces familiar from various Japanese animated series (and perhaps familar to American comics readers from its apparent influence on character design for the elves in ***ELFQUEST***). Still, some other major characters of the film are not close replicas of Colan's versions. Frank Drake is unrecognizable; not only that, but he has been turned into something of a martial arts expert. Rachel van Helsing in identifiable, but lacks both her Marvel counterpart's beauty and her symbolic facial scar. Although Rachel uses her familiar crossbow, her principal role in the film seems to be simply that of pushing Quincy Harker's wheelchair. The film's Quincy looks almost exactly like Colan's, but that "almost" is a big one. Toei's Quincy seems bigger and more robust, in part at least because of the inexplicably dark tone of his skin, much darker than Frank's or Rachel's. It is as if Quincy spent his time sitting under a sun lamp to ward off vampires.

I do not know Japanese, and so I could only follow the film's story from the visuals and from my knowledge of the original ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** issues. Yes, indeed, the film covers almost the entire history of the comic's final two years, from Dracula's initial encounter with Domini to his destruction at Harker's hands, even including a cinematic equivalent of the montage of images on the last pages of the final issue. There are various interesting changes, none of which affects the basic story in major ways, and some of which actually improve it. There is a flashback recounting the Wolfman version of Dracula's origin; however, the sequence concerning the death of Domini's puritanical father has been deleted. Harold H. Harold and Topaz do not appear, presumably having been thought not to be essential to the main story, but, surprisingly, the entire Lilith sequence turns up in the film. The portrait of Christ does not play a major role, but Harker's dog Saint receives special emphasis in certain scenes, and to good effect: the dog's ferocity comes across strongly. The death of Janus is staged effectively, but not at all as powerfully as in the explosive sequence in the comics version. It is inexplicable, at least to someone who does not understand Japanese, how Dracula regains his vampiric powers and gets to Transylvania. Satan is present in the film from the very beginning, giving greater unity to the story. One idea of the filmmaker's of which Wolfman highly approves comes in Dracula's battle with his vampiric rival in Transylvania. Earlier Dracula had protected some children from attack by other vampires by holding a cross. In the later fight Dracula burns his rival by striking him with his hand, and we see that the cross had burned its imprint into Dracula's own hand.

In one instance the film is less sexually permissive than the comic. Janus is apparently born in a hospital after an offscreen, presumably natural mating by his parents. Hence there is no equivalent in the film to the comics' impressive light show sequence involving the partially obscured but obviously nude Dracula and Domini signifying their mystical and sexual union to create Janus. On the other hand, the film's Dracula sinks his teeth into women's necks graphically, in full view of the camera, and we are allowed to see a good deal of Angel's body (and she is not pregnant in the film) in the shower before she transforms into Lilith.

As usual in the Japanese animation I have seen, there is not much movement in the film compared to that in the classic Hollywood animated films. The ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** film's strengths are those of the best of Japanese animation: the composition, the camera angles, and the evocation of mood. The ***TOMB*** film successfully captures the dark, somber world Colan gave us in his ***"Dracula"*** artwork.

But the film's most stunning moment involves not darkness but light. It takes place when, before the eyes of Dracula and Domini in the cemetery, the body of the dead baby Janus unites with the angel who will possess and transform him. Bright light floods the screen, creating lovely patterns, enveloping the characters, and driving Dracula back. This is surely what a miracle must look like.

Marv Wolfman's storyline for the last years of ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** was a remarkable one. It showed the lord of evil, Dracula, first discovering human love through a wife and son, and then not only having to suffer the loss of that son, but to have the son then return in rebellion against his father's corrupt ways. It showed Dracula overcome by a master of evil far more powerful than himself, losing his own power but not his pride and dignity. It showed Dracula coming to battle his own evil kind, and even finding himself defending humans and, to his own astonishment, aligning himself on the side of God, bearing a crucifix as a weapon. It showed Dracula fighting his way back up to a position of power after having lost everything. This was ambitious, powerful material, standing far above the soap operatic formulae of too many comic scripts. It is to the credit of the Toei people that they saw the value of this material and transferred it to the screen intact and effectively.

We now know from ***VARIETY*** that Marvel and Toei are working together on an animated rock version of ***THE NUTCRACKER.*** No comment. But to see the ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** film is to wonder. What if there was an animated film of the original "Galactus trilogy" of ***FANTASTIC FOUR #48-50***? Or the Dr. Doom epic of ***FF #57-60***? Or the Krull-Skree War? Or the Silver Dagger-Orb of Agamotto-Death story in ***DOCTOR STRANGE***? Or any major Marvel or DC epic? Apart from a few bright exceptions like the ***SUPERMAN*** movie (apart from its handling of Luthor), we have endured many disastrous live action and animated adaptations of Marvel and DC material. The ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** film stands as a sign of what is possible. Let us hope that someday more will follow in the path taken by the ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** movie.

—P.S.

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Marv Wolfman's *TOMB OF DRACULA*s Examined

by Kurt Busiek

When Marvel's ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** series began in 1972, it had one major problem. It starred a vampire. Or, more properly, it starred ***the*** vampire; Dracula, the most famous bloodsucker in history. Now, considering that vampires are murderers, evil, damned souls, and generally nasty, it was difficult to reasonably star one in a comic book. The Comics Code, for example, specifically stated that evil must not go unpunished, and aside from that, a simple sense of morals required that the vampire could not triumph in his comic book the way Captain America and Iron Man continually triumphed in theirs. And yet, neither could he lose. The only really effective defeat for a vampire is death, and that certainly isn't an option in a continuing series. The only recourse, at first glance, is an interminable series of clashes between evil (Dracula) and good (us humans) with no clear winner; making stalemates, draws, and aborted victories the order of the day. With all this evident, it's difficult to imagine why Marvel would have decided to publish a Dracula series, but for some reason they did. ***TOMB OF DRACULA***, despite its difficult subject material, managed to last quite a while, and it behooves us to examine the series, to see how it made such an untenable concept work.

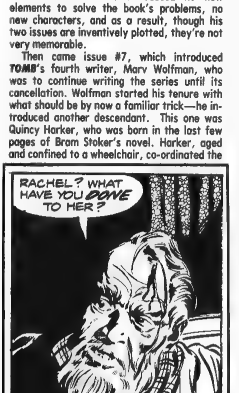
There is nothing spectacular about the first two issues. Written by Gerry Conway, they feature typical Dracula movie fare, which is to be expected, since the character has to be introduced in the manner that the audience is accustomed to. Still, these issues introduce two characters for a supporting cast (and though one doesn't last long, the other is present throughout ***TOMB***'s entire run), and set a pattern that would be followed with other supporting characters. Frank Drake, a descendant of Dracula's, and his "friend" Clifton Graves (also introduced is Frank's fiancee Jeannie, but she doesn't live out the story) come to Transylvania to claim Frank's inheritance. While the three of them explore Castle Dracula, Clifton frees Drac, and the fun begins. Clifton is basically a weasel, a conniving little rat who talked Frank into claiming his inheritance so he could steal it from him and make a fortune in the Transylvanian tourist trade. Frank, on the other hand, is slightly more complex. He's a dissipated young ex-millionnaire, who blew all his inheritance (except Castle Dracula) in three years, and is almost penniless and at loose ends at the start of the series. He's never worked in his life, and seems to not be good for much. Still, he exhibits the strength of personality to stand up to—and even fight—Dracula, even if he isn't very good at it. Also, in issue #2, as his fiancee Jeannie comes back as a vampire, he manages to kill her, to recognize the corruption within her and overcome his love for what she appears to be. Still, the characters are merely ***introduced***. Whether or not Conway could have surmounted the difficulties inherent in the material is unknown, since with issue #3, a new writer took over.

Archie Goodwin was the first to actually do anything with either spineless Clifton or heroic (on the surface) Frank. His brief tenure on ***TOMB*** began with Frank's attempted suicide, and Clifton's enthrallment by Dracula. Goodwin also introduced two more characters: Rachel Van Helsing, a descendant of the man who slew Dracula (you're beginning to see the pattern already, right?), and Taj, her mute Indian "servant," stop Frank from committing suicide over the horror he feels at having killed his fiancee (even if she was a vampire) and reveal that they are Vampire Hunters. This takes the magazine from the first, "vampire movie" story, and turns it into something that can conceivably be a series without immediately palling on the reader. Now, rather than Dracula running around killing all the beautiful young women in the neighborhood until somebody up and stakes him, the Vampire Hunters can stop him from killing all one locale's women, and then chase him somewhere else, and the whole thing can start over again. It's not much more palatable than the first formula, but it's something. (Note: These formulas I speak of never actually took over the book. Neither Goodwin nor Conway lasted more than two issues. I don't mean to impugn the reputation of either writer by intimating that he would have merely ground out

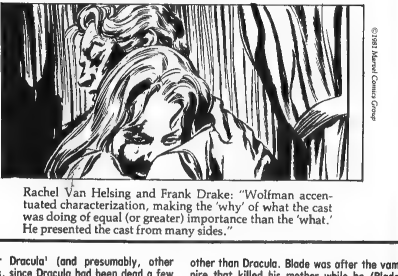
repetitive story after repetitive story; I'm only saying that they did not add anything to the book that made the series more than the difficult-to-write concept it was at the start.) Goodwin had the better credits for writing ***TOMB OF DRACULA***—he had written ***"Vampirella"*** for quite a while for Warren Publications, and had proven himself adept at creating inventive vampire plots. Vampirella, however, could be construed as a heroic figure (it's difficult, but possible). Count Dracula couldn't, not really. In any case, Goodwin stalled off boredom by the simple trick of introducing two new characters to which the reader could be introduced, which would take time. He also used ***TOMB*** to present a morality play, typical of the horror genre. Ilsa Strangway attempts to manipulate Dracula to regain her lost youth, and ends up damned for her trouble and no less old. Moral: Evil can only corrupt, stay away from it. This sort of story would become a staple for ***TOMB*** later on.

Gardner Fox finished up Goodwin's storyline, and added one more story to the ***"Dracula"*** canon. He introduced no new elements to solve the book's problems, no new characters, and as a result, though his two issues are inventively plotted, they're not very memorable.

Then came issue #7, which introduced ***TOMB***'s fourth writer, Marv Wolfman, who was to continue writing the series until its cancellation. Wolfman started his tenure with what should be by now a familiar trick—he introduced another descendant. This one was Quincy Harker, who was born in the last few pages of Bram Stoker's novel. Harker, aged and confined to a wheelchair, co-ordinated the



Quincy Harker, "chief" of the Vampire Hunters.



Rachel Van Helsing and Frank Drake: "Wolfman accentuated characterization, making the 'why' of what the cast was doing of equal (or greater) importance than the 'what.' He presented the cast from many sides."

hunt for Dracula[1] (and presumably, other vampires, since Dracula had been dead a few years when the series began). One began to think there were Vampire Hunters everywhere. In any case, Quincy (and his daughter Edith) made yet another new element to learn about, thus keeping up interest. And after the story that introduced the Harkers and brought all the Vampire Hunters together, Wolfman turned around and wrote them all out. They made a brief appearance in ***TOMB #9***, but had nothing to do with the story, which was a character piece about a young man who wanted to leave the small town he grew up in. Aside from focusing (for the first time) on someone other than Dracula and his would-be assassins, this issue infused Dracula himself with some real personality. Dracula stopped a pair of vampires from putting the bite on the young man's girlfriend, simply because he ***liked*** the boy. This was a divergence from the haughty, inhuman Drac of whom most of the audience was aware. It showed that Dracula was capable of the likes and dislikes (and presumably loves and fears) of a human being. This would become very important in later issues.

Wolfman seemed very aware of the problems with the Dracula series, because over his next ten or so issues, he guaranteed that at least in one way ***TOMB*** would be interesting. Due to Wolfman's innovative approaches and storytelling experiments, the reader had no idea what to expect in each new issue. Wolfman introduced yet another new character: Blade, the first Vampire Hunter who was looking for someone other than Dracula. Blade was after the vampire that killed his mother while he (Blade) was being born, and he ruthlessly killed any vampire he met. (Incidentally, all the Vampire Hunters had different methods of operation. Frank would try to punch out Dracula (who says ex-millionaires have brains?), Rachel had a crossbow that fired wooden quarrels, Taj mostly tried to hold Drac down so Rachel could shoot him, Quincy had an anti-vampire arsenal built into his wheelchair (reminiscent of The Chief's "action chair"), and Blade had a bandolier of wooden knives that offed vampires with great frequency.) In the same issue that Blade premiered, Wolfman killed off Clifton Graves, who hadn't been good for much even as a slave of Dracula. Wolfman would thereafter systematically write out anyone who wasn't interesting, thus guaranteeing an engaging cast. He sent Taj back to India when it became apparent that there were more than enough Vampire Hunters, and a mute one didn't add much to the book other than clutter, and he even temporarily wrote Frank out when the character stagnated. Wolfman presented three more morality plays; the first featured a man who tried to use voodoo for revenge, the second centered around a confused evangelist who tried to twist Dracula's hellborn attributes into a Christian message, and the third about a wrongfully-disinterred skeleton that sought eternal peace in its proper resting place. In the second of these Dracula dies—albeit temporarily—just to keep the series unpredictable. Dracula killed Quincy Harker's daughter, in order to keep the Vampire Hunters involved with things, and finally, Wolfman presented an issue of Dracula's Diary. In it, the Vampire Lord simply sits in his lair and writes in his journal, about three stories that happened to him over the hundreds of years he has existed. It was another way of making Dracula more human, as it allowed the reader to identify with Dracula, for a change, and see through his eyes. There was also a crossover with ***WEREWOLF BY NIGHT***, in the tradition of the old "Monster A meets Monster B" films.

But while all this was going on, Wolfman

[1]Quincy's role as behind-the-scenes co-ordinator, coupled with his handicap, was reminiscent of the "leader" character of one of Wolfman's favorite strips, The Chief (Niles Caulder) of the original Doom Patrol. This resemblance was further borne out by Dr. Sun, whom Wolfman admits was greatly inspired by The DP's arch-foe The Brain.

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FOR SCRIBING WHAT I FEEL WITH IN ME
INTEREST IS NOW TO BE PURELY COMPASSIONATE TAKES DESTRAIN
AS THE BIRTHING OF PREVIOUS PAINS SOOTHES THE CHILD'S CRIES
"I AM DRACULA," IT BEGINS. AND TO BE DRACULA IS TO BE ALONE. NO OTHER CREATURE BORN OF MAN OR WOMAN CAN HAVE EXPERIENCED THAT, AND ALL TOO OFTEN HAVE I SUFFERED.

The Diary: "...a way of making Dracula more human."

had a sub-plot building in the background. A mysterious Dr. Sun was investigating vampires, and had even kidnapped one, and was training it to fight Dracula. While all the divergent, surprising elements were popping up to make each new issue interesting, the Vampire Hunters and this sub-plot kept a sense of continuity going. Slowly, the sub-plot took over the book, until finally Dr. Sun stood revealed (as a brain connected to a computer), and the confrontation took place. Immediately before this, Wolfman had had Dracula and Rachel Van Helsing stumble around lost in the Alps for a while, so that the readers became acquainted with Dracula's bravery, fortitude, and his intense will to "live." So when Sun unleashed his scientifically-augmented vampire on Dracula, the reader was firmly on Drac's side, cheering him on in this fight to the "death." Wolfman had taken one of the greatest symbols of evil in literature, and made him, if not a hero, at least sympathetic. And the way he performed this feat proved to be the basis for ***TOMB***'s continued appeal, and broke the barrier that had made a vampire comic seem unworkable. The magazine was not set up for the traditional Marvel "confrontation/resolution" type of story, in that any resolution had to be ultimately unsatisfying, because Dracula would still live, and he remained (let's face it) a bad guy. Wolfman's resolutions were consequently muted—ends to chapters rather than ends to stories. Since the major resolution could not happen, minor ones would and the issues, and there would always be an impetus to read the next issue—in which the big story went on, even if the little one was over. Then another story would be developed as this major story went on, a story that would not be resolved until it was large enough and complicated enough to draw the reader's attention away from the good/evil, Vampire Hunters/Dracula confrontation. The first Dr. Sun story, for example, escalated until it became a major force in the characters' destinies, over and above whatever else might concern them at the time. And to further divert attention from the plot, and get the reader involved with something other than Dracula's evil, Wolfman accentuated characterization, making the "why" of what the cast was doing of equal (or greater) importance than the "what." He presented the cast from many sides—how they saw themselves, how those they were fighting saw them, how they saw each other...any new viewpoint from which we could possibly learn more about the characters would be an excuse to drop everything and work on character.

Lilith, Dracula's daughter, faces her father:

"...whenever he wanted to, Wolfman could (at least temporarily) make Dracula the hero of the story...All these complex maneuverings simply made it possible to...explore other things."

And it worked! ***Especially*** with Dracula himself. He became an aristocrat, a warrior, a scholar, and above all, a man. It's hard to consider someone a soulless monster once you get to know them, and Wolfman let us get to know Dracula plenty well. So whenever he wanted to, Wolfman could (at least temporarily) make Dracula the hero of the story, by setting him up against something that was more of a monster (not more evil, but less familiar, and thus easier to hate) than Drac himself. This is not to say that Dracula's evil became unimportant. All these complex maneuverings simply made it possible for Wolfman to cloud or overshadow it for a while in order to explore other things, and thus keep the series intriguing. The menace inherent in the Dracula character is so strong that it's impossible to keep it hidden long—especially since Drac has a startling tendency to turn around and attack an innocent bystander just when you've been applauding his moral sense.

After the Dr. Sun situation was resolved, Wolfman returned to his quick genre-switching while he set up the next epic. An authentic Russian vampire legend gave way to gothic horror-romance with Drac as the hero. Then, while Wolfman wrote out Taj and Frank (sending them to India and South America respectively), he introduced another character to keep us on our toes. This new cast member was an interesting character type, as well as an exponent for further exploration of the vampire curse, because while the newcomer

GO NOW, OR, SO HELP ME--YOU'LL FEEL AN AGONY AS YOU NEVER HAVE BEFORE...
"LILITH"... THEN IT IS YOU!
SHE STANDS TALL AND PROUD, DRESSED IN EBONY. HER LONG BLACK TRESSES SILHOUETTE A PALE, ASHEN FACE.

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I REALLY DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE HERE, AURORA.
THIS IS THE REAL MCCOY!
HE'S CUTE. I COULD REALLY LEARN TO DIG HIM. YOU THINK HE'LL LIKE ME?
I DOUBT IT, AURORA. VAMPIRES ARE DEAD— PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.
THAT'S NOT A NICE THING TO SAY, HAROLD— ESPECIALLY ABOUT SOMEONE AS CUTE AS HIM.
HAROLD! LISTEN! I THINK HE'S TRYING TO SAY SOMETHING.
SHHHH! LET ME HEAR HIM.
BLOOD MUST HAVE BLOOD.

Harold and Aurora: "...they were so alien to the *TOMB* status quo...that the reader could really feel for them."

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Hannibal King was a private investigator, and also on the trail of the same vampire Blade was after, he was also a vampire himself—a good vampire, who had never given in to curse, never killed to get his blood supply. He provided a fascinating counterpoint to both Blade and Dracula, since he proved that for all Dracula's nobility and class, he had succumbed to the curse's impetus toward callousness and evil, and King was still fighting it. Blade, of course, considered all vampires "scum," and only good for killing. What would he do when confronted with a vampire that fought for good? Many readers wrote in requesting a Blade/King team-up, and Wolfman probably chuckled gleefully over the complexity he was engendering in a "simple" monster comic. Dr. Sun entered the picture again (unrevealed), and another strong continuity thread began, to string together several otherwise unrelated stories. Dracula wrote some more in his diary, had a plot to infiltrate Parliament foiled, was nearly killed by Quincy Harker, and participated in a morality play about a fashion designer. All of these plots, though, while they kept things moving, seemed unimportant next to the fact that Dracula was progressively losing his vampiric powers, and that he didn't know why.

Wolfman frequently staged elaborate characterization scenes, in which someone's entire life was recounted in a few captions. These added to the illusion of depth in the series, suggesting vast vistas.

In the midst of all this, Wolfman devoted more space to characterization of the Vampire Hunters, which slowed the actual plot down even more. During the Quincy Harker confrontation, a flashback was included which revealed how Quincy had lost the use of his legs, and simultaneous "sub-plots" progressed featuring Taj and Frank, in an interesting "side-bar" system. Though these storylines were fit into the issues in traditional subplot style—cutting away from the main action for a brief scene elsewhere—they can't truly be considered sub-plots because they never really had any effect on the main story. Taj's story effectively ended his involvement with ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** (he was never seen again) by revealing and resolving his reasons for being a Vampire Hunter, and the South America "side-bar" solved Frank's characterization problem (he was a wimp) by having Brother Voodoo, of all people, teach him courage. The side-bar storylines weren't totally successful, though. The reader was kept waiting for something to happen connecting the "sub-plots" to the main story—especially in the issues that featured them on the cover—but that bridging never came. (Wolfman *did* use the side-bar system successfully later, but then he at least had the side-bar story take over the magazine eventually, even if it never did have much to do with Dracula.) Still, the technique was at least innovative, something ***TOMB*** was becoming known for, and the readers were likely to excuse its awkwardness because it showed that Wolfman was still trying new methods.

In any case, Drac flew to the U.S. (in a story entirely narrated by eyewitnesses—another innovation), the Hunters followed him (even Frank, who got unceremoniously dumped in Boston's Logan Airport by Brother Voodoo), and the stage was set for the final showdown—or almost set, anyway. Dracula still had to assume the hero's role in his series, so the readership would be on *his* side for the finale. Towards that end, Wolfman played up Sun's power over Dracula (since Sun was contemptuously toying with Drac, we tended to side with the underdog), introduced two more characters (whom I'll get to shortly), and even utilized Dracula's *stature* as a legendary evil to sway the audience to Drac's side. He simply had Dracula killed by Juno, a henchman of Dr. Sun's whom we'd never seen before. He had no special weapons that made him superior to the Vampire Hunters (he had a gimmick—a silver spike on one arm—but then all the Hunters had gimmicks) who had, after all, been hunting Drac for years. To have a rather uninteresting newcomer kill the star villain off just didn't seem fair. So in order for the story to be equal to the Dracula legend, Dracula *had* to come back and fight Dr. Sun. It was only right. Topping this off was the fact that it was the Vampire Hunters themselves, helpless to stop Sun's plans of world domination, who resurrected Drac. The situation positively reeked of moral ambiguity. Dracula faced Dr. Sun and was triumphant. No wonder ***PARENTS' MAGAZINE*** considered ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** one of the most potentially-harmful-to-children comic books available. The audience was cheering vampires!

Harmful or not, ***TOMB*** was still making strides in technique to keep the vampire concept interesting and saleable. The two new characters introduced in the Dr. Sun story typified this (if anything can be said to typify diversity). Harold H. Harold and Aurora Rabinowitz brought a touch of comedy to the series, and, though comedy is hardly unknown in comic books, it was certainly something new for a horror comic. The effect of these two bizarrely humorous characters was even more of a jolt than Juno's murder of Dracula. Harold's and Aurora's comedy both undercut *and* heightened the gloomy, tragic nature of ***TOMB***'s mood. The Vampire Hunters were so grim and purposeful that to die for their cause would be a fitting end (as indeed, it was, when Quincy eventually died). But Harold and Aurora were different—they were so alien to the ***TOMB*** status quo, so helpless, that the reader could really fear for them. Harold wrote schlock horror stories for an exploitation rag called ***TRUE VAMPIRE STORIES***; and was the typical shnook—he lacked money, good looks, manly physique, ability; even the editor of ***TRUE VAMPIRE STORIES*** thought his writing stunk. And yet, Harold faced the world with a sort of ineffable, schleppy charm. Totally aware of his incapabilities (except for his lack of writing skill), he goes through life as best he can, simply because there's nothing else to do. Aurora, the girl of Harold's dreams, was the secretary for ***TRUE***

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REQUIEM FOR A VAMPIRE!
THE STORM RAGES ON AND ON... DOMINI AND EVEN I HAVE DIFFICULTY MOVING THROUGH THE TURBULENCE.
PERHAPS I SHOULD PROCURE AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION SHOULD YOU NEED TO LEAVE OUR HOME.
AFTER ALL, I MUST NOW ATTEND TO THE AFFAIRS OF MY DARK CHURCH
PLEASE, MY HUSBAND, COME HERE, LOOK AT OUR CHILD.
ISN'T HE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BABY YOU HAVE EVER SEEN?

The family life of Dracula: "[Domini's] ambiguous nature is deepened by the fact that after she married Dracula, she truly came to love him, yet at the same time she keeps a faith in God."

VAMPIRE STORIES, and she was as vacuous as she was beautiful. Her favorite topic of conversation was perfume, or maybe lipstick. (She was "cosmetically aware.") These two were definitely not equipped to face Dracula. Whereas the Vampire Hunters attacked Drac every chance they got, Harold, upon meeting the Vampire Lord, tried to interview him. Aurora fell madly in love with Dracula. Worse, Aurora actively looked forward to her every chance of seeing Drac. It seemed to totally pass her by that each such meeting brought her dangerously close to death and damnation. To kill her off would be far worse than to kill, say, the noble but tainted Rachel. Aurora had a feeling of life and, yes, innocence that none of the Vampire Hunters could match: where their lives were full of crossbow bolts, crucifixes, and strategy, her existence revolved around dates, dresses and bubble bath—just as Harold was exclusively concerned with his bank balance and the elusiveness of the opposite sex. Silly though they were, Harold and Aurora led lives far closer to the audience's own lives than to those of the obsessed, globe-hopping Vampire Hunters. The "comic relief" characters put the threat Dracula embodied into terms the average reader could immediately grasp, which made the horror content of the book much more effective.

After a single-issue story told from the viewpoint of a newspaper reporter trying to write a Dracula expose, Wolfman began a twenty-seven issue storyline which would last the remainder of ***TOMB***'s run. It began in traditional fashion, with sub-plots imbedded in otherwise unrelated stories, but unlike previous plots, these featured Dracula and his plans, rather than another character's schemes against Dracula. So rather than slowly building up into a presence that affected Drac, these subplots were important to the book almost immediately, and indeed, took over the magazine (albeit temporarily) in the fourth issue of the series. It moved along rapidly for a ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** plot at the start: during a ***DR. STRANGE*** crossover, Dracula finds and moves into a deconsecrated church. During a Blade/Hannibal King story (the other side-bar story Wolfman did) Dracula finds a Satan cult and, masquerading as Satan, takes it over. During a morality play issue about pollution and big business, Dracula gets married. Then the plot takes up the whole book, for while the important element in the next issue is that Dracula's wife is (mystically) made pregnant by him, the bulk of the issue is ***not*** an unrelated conflict, but rather a character piece in which the father of the bride attempts to disrupt and destroy the Satan cult and reclaim his daughter. This was weird stuff, to say the least. For all the time Wolfman had spent in the past making his Dracula into a human being (damned but still human) with human reactions and emotions, he had nonetheless primarily presented Dracula as someone who ran around biting people on the neck and making occasional half-hearted attempts to rule the world. The interest and variation in these plots was provided by the Vampire Hunters and the "villains" (not counting Drac as a villain for a moment). But from the outset of the "Satan Cult" plot-line, the focus of ***TOMB*** was clearly on Dracula himself, and how he went about living this un-life of his. The origins of vampirism were explored (since Dracula was setting himself up as the new Dark Lord, thus putting himself in direct competition with Satan, from whom Dracula's evil springs) and God was brought into the story too, through the agency of a life-sized portrait of Christ hanging in Dracula's deconsecrated church. Two new characters had been introduced, both of them fitting well into the Heaven-and Hell aspects of the story-line. The first, Anton Lupeski, was leader of a Satan cult and planned to manipulate the cult, and Dracula, to give himself power (having seen the fate of others in ***TOMB*** who sought to manipulate evil to their own personal gain, we know already he's doomed to failure). Dracula's wife Domini, however, was a far more intriguing character. The name means "belonging to God," and we first saw her in a Satanic rite, being betrothed to the Dark Lord. Her ambiguous nature is deepened by the fact that after she married Dracula, she truly comes to love him, yet at the same time she keeps a faith in God (as evinced by her attachment to the Christ portrait).

Having introduced all these new and surprising elements in relatively short order, Wolfman slowed down the plot once more and for a simple reason: Domini is pregnant, and the next plot element of major importance was to be the birth of Dracula's son. There were one or two things which needed to happen before the birth, but not enough to fill nine months, so

Wolfman returned to the unrelated-stories-loosely-strung-together format he'd used before. In the six issues between the conception and the birth, Wolfman diverted the reader's attention from the fact that little is happening by having two character pieces (one about a female vampire who wants to be killed, the other about a madwoman who conjures up literary characters for company) and allowed the side-bar story about Hannibal King and Blade's hunt for the vampire that killed both Blade's mother and King himself to take over the magazine twice. Also, Lupeski's treachery and the aura of mystery surrounding the Christ portrait were highlighted in a story featuring The Silver Surfer, and Dracula fought an angel (whom he mistakes for a demon) and defeated him, though there were ominous portents given about the angel's return.

By the time of Dracula's son's birth, the magazine was abounding with religious overtones. As if it weren't enough that Dracula is trying to take over from Satan, is living in a church, and fights heaven-sent angels, add this to the list: Since vampires are impotent, the mystically induced conception of his son was an immaculate one, and the son is born in a manger on Christmas. The symbolism would be getting a little thick, if not for the fact that the continual reference to the Christ portrait led the readers to believe that there were forces at work big enough to merit it. By this time, Wolfman didn't really need to add anything more to generate reader interest; the readers were on the edges of their seats anyway. However, while simply writing God into a comic book *will* generate attention, it's a subject which has to be handled delicately to avoid offending your readers' sensibilities (and even more delicately to end up with a good story). And for all the apparent bodily interference in the lives and destinies of this comic book cast, there are only two bonafide Heavenly items in the storyline, and both are handled circumspectly. The portrait of Christ never does anything a normal picture wouldn't. The significance it is invested with by the characters, and by the writer's and artist's recurring focus on it, is *not* generated by Wolfman having Christ take a hand in the story, but through the various characters' beliefs and reactions to the portrait. It serves as a reminder more than anything else. The angel is appropriately mysterious—indeed, perhaps because of ***TOMB OF DRACULA***'s cancellation, he never does fulfill his ultimate purpose, nor are we told what part he was to play in the grand scheme of things. He simply *is*, as the Christ portrait *is*, and all of his actions seem appropriately angelic, so he is both dramatic and acceptable to wary Christians.

The symbolism begins to fold into itself after three issues that further the plot not at all (a novel by Harold H. Harold, a character piece about a continually reincarnated man, and a Blade story in which Dracula never even appears), when the son of Dracula (Janus) is killed through treachery and is reincarnated three days later, as the angel Dracula fought earlier. This was a bizarre parody of Christ's resurrection and the vampire legend (which is itself a bizarre parody of Christ). The Janus-angel character, merely by existing, points out the links between vampirism and Christianity, connecting Dracula with Christ as well as with Satan.

From that point on, ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** never returned to the unrelated-story format, since there was more than enough material and variety in the main story-line to carry the series for a long time. If ***TOMB*** hadn't been cancelled, it's difficult to imagine anything following a story of this magnitude (although Wolfman apparently had something planned, due both to the loose ends left concerning the Janus character, and also due to the reintroduction of Topaz in the next sequence). Dracula goes to Hell and is robbed of his vampiric powers as punishment for setting in motion events which threaten Satan's power, and Topaz (formerly of ***WEREWOLF BY NIGHT***) was also brought into the story, as the potential instrument of Satan's destruction. But Topaz's curious appearance and equally-curious disappearance (for all we know, she's still in Hell) went unnoticed amidst the latest major developments. How better to explore the roots of vampirism than to return to them? Dracula turned human is a fascinating study in character—he's the same arrogant warrior, and even without his supernatural powers his air of superiority does not leave him. But this Dracula, inevitably, must view both humanity and vampires from a different perspective than he has been doing over the past 500 years. In his quest to regain his vampiric powers, he learns the frustration the Vampire Hunters have been feeling as they foil time after time to defeat him. He is rejected first by his own daughter and then by the legion of vampires that inhabit Transylvania. He also learns the true lack of honor in his former subjects, as they try to kill him, and spurn him in favor of their new leader, Torgo.

After Dracula rejects his former "life" and prays to God for salvation, his powers are returned by Satan, who reveals that ***this***, rather than the "humanizing," was Dracula's true punishment. He has been forced to go back on everything he believed, and grovel before a God he had sworn to oppose. Living with his own hypocrisy is his punishment. And again, Wolfman has given us a fascinating portrait of a character: a Hell-spawned being who has renounced Hell and accepted God. The depth and power of this story-line is so great that when, in the last two issues, Dracula regains control over the world's vampires, realizes that they are scum and not worth ruling, and is killed by a dying Quincy Harker, it all seems anticlimactic.

TOMB OF DRACULA changed its format and became a black-and-white magazine, without the Vampire Hunters, without the continuity and depth of character Wolfman had brought to the color ***TOMB***—without the elements Wolfman had carefully crafted to make an untenable concept into a series. It's not surprising then, that even with the same creative team, the black-and-white ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** was not as notable a series as its predecessor—it was just another vampire comic. Throughout seventy issues, the color ***TOMB OF DRACULA*** stood, and still stands, as a dramatic statement that the concept of a "viable commercial series" is looser and wider than one might think, and if time is given to carefully consider how a series should best be treated, even the most unworkable of concepts can be made into a new model of success.

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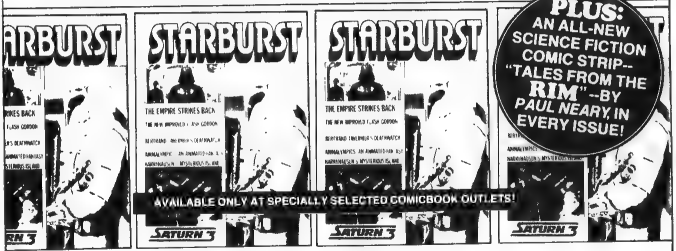

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the light and shadow of... ECLIPSE

by Marlaken Joplin

***ECLIPSE, THE MAGAZINE* #1**
May, 1981. Editor, Dean Mullaney. Published by Eclipse Enterprises, 81 Delaware St., Staten Island, NY 10304. 64 pages, $2.95.

The lead story in *ECLIPSE* featuring The Foozle. This story is the reconverted *"Superman/Creeper" DC PRESENTS*, and almost recognizable as such.

Fan publications are funny things. On one hand, the publishers of these numerous little endeavors are hip to the bad side of comics and comics creators, and so strive to produce a product free of the shortcomings they find elsewhere. They make them personal labors of love, and, as evidenced by such titles as ***ELFQUEST***, such meticulous care is noted and appreciated by the buyer.

On the other hand, there's still that fannish adoration of the "pros"—the Goshwow Factor, as I perversely like to call it—to contend with. To fan editors in general, a star is a star because he's a star, and, by some arcane reasoning known only to themselves, they equate stardom with perfection. So, to select a recent example, people go ga-ga over Frank Miller's dynamic layouts and superiative story-telling ability, and ignore the fact that both his knowledge of anatomy and his ability to draw recognizable Marvel characters still have a long way to go. (For example, in ***WHAT IF...? #28***, the ***"Daredevil"*** issue, would you have recognized that character on the third page as being Tony Stark if the scripter hadn't said so in the dialogue? I thought not.)

Combined, the two form a paradoxical attitude unique to comics fandom. And when applied to fan publications, the ultimate worthiness of the publication, whether trash or treasure, hinges upon which attitude wins out over the other.

ECLIPSE, THE MAGAZINE, big names and professional packaging aside, is a fan publication, imbued with the heart, soul, and sweat of its editor, Dean Mullaney. Mullaney's Eclipse Enterprises, over the course of the past year or so, has provided a professionally executed, well-assembed showcase for some of comicdom's most beloved talents: Steve Gerber, Marshall Rogers, Don McGregor, P. Craig Russell, Gene Colan, Tom Palmer, and Paul Gulacy. Mullaney's careful packaging and promotion of each new project reveal an attention to detail and a sincere love for the medium which should be emulated by every publisher in the business. It wasn't the promise of higher rates which persuaded Jim Starlin to sell his second ***METAMORPHOSIS ODYSSEY*** book to Eclipse, rather than to Marvel or to ***HEAVY METAL***; it was the certain knowledge that his work would be handled by someone to whom comics and graphic art in general are more than mere commodities.

But Mullaney is still a fan, and Eclipse is still a fan-run enterprise, and, like any other fan-run enterprise, the Goshwow Factor takes its toll. To have your name associated with the creation of a work means to be held responsible for its contents as well. ***STEWART THE RAT***, for example, was in desperate need of an editor, someone who could tap Steve Gerber on the shoulder and point out where the story began to deviate from its original scientifically-based premise, or point out its excesses (***Another*** anti-disco stand? Yawn). This lack of a strong hand has had its effect on nearly every Eclipse presentation to date, to

various degrees, marring Eclipse's image as a publisher of quality graphic art and story material.

ECLIPSE, like previous Mullaney efforts, is a slick, professional publication that fairly radiates competence. From the layout of the contents and contributor's pages, to the choice of typeface, to the unobtrusive placement of advertisements, Eclipse shows taste and class—a first-rate format which any graphic artist or writer would be proud to see his or her work in.

Mullaney, with the assistance of Marshall Rogers, has assembled a sterling cast of contributors for his first issue—one which, unlike other publications, covers a broad spectrum of creators: Steve Englehart, Marshall Rogers, Jim Starlin, Craig Russell, and Paul Gulacy from the Marvel/DC pantheon; Trina Robbins and Howard Cruse from the underground/ground-level genre; Marc Hempel and Don Maitz from the field of fantasy illustration; and Chris Browne and Max Collins from the world of comic strips. Each of them were given their creative heads and told to "do what they love to do best—tell stories," according to Mullaney's introduction. Implicit in that request is an unspoken siren-call to do something that the creators have never done before. Most of them took their chance and ran with it, and the results are interesting to behold.

Englehart and Rogers' ***"Slab"*** has already been ballyhooed elsewhere as the re-written ***"Superman/Creeper"*** story which Englehart withheld from DC over a pay dispute, but the characters of S-329, Agent of Storbor and Klonsbon the Foozle are recognizable as their more famous literary counterparts only if the reader has been informed of the situation beforehand. Englehart has taken the story a hundred or so years into the future, into a regimentad, Reagan-ized society in which musical voices hold command over people's daily lives, and everyone is known by I.D. numbers; names have become eccentric personal affectations, like nicknames are to us. Both the Agent of Storbor (Superman) and the Foozle (Creeper) have been given feminine identities, although each still holds his/her occupation in the journalistic spectrum: TV anchor and investigative reporter, respectively.

"Slab:" "...has...endearing silliness."

But most importantly, in light of the fact that Englehart and Rogers are known for their serious, brooding ***"Batman"*** stories, Englehart has leeched the seriousness out of the story's execution, transforming it into the kind of fun-to-read tale which could never be told at either of the major companies. It has the same endearing silliness which made ***F-MAN*** as popular as it was. The Agent travels to and fro on a turbo-powered flying bed, mumbling "Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet..." etc. The Slab devours a victim (who screams, "Naaanoooonaanooo!") and mutters appreciatively, "Mmm, good!" after the henious deed is done. And the Foozle itself is a bizarre little birdlike affair, with a Durante schnozz, and The Penguin's spats. Unlike slapstick, however, these little bits are not the story in themselves, but rather the few additional silver threads which give ***"Slab"*** its own special shine.

Howard Cruse's ***"Death"*** is also a departure—from the whimsy of his ***"Barefootz"*** series, or from the moving ***"Billy Goes Out,"*** which appeared in his landmark ***GAY COMIX***. ***"Death"*** is a lighthearted romp through the different aspects of a somber topic, done in much the same manner as was popular in ***MAD*** or in ***NATIONAL LAMPOON***. The caricature of Cruse approaches a little boy, earnestly asking him, ***"Hi*** there, young fellow! Do you think you're gonna be ***dead*** someday?" He explains to the poor child how he'll someday be "as dead as this little ***puppy*** that got ***run over*** this morning," leaving the kid in histrionics while he moves on to the next topic. Whether amusing himself with mortician's wax, or cheerfully talking about the psychological benefits of mourning in the middle of an open-casket funeral ceremony ("You folks don't mind ***me!*** Just go ahead and ***cry***...it's ***good*** for you!"), Cruse pops the sobriety of the subject with wit and even a sort of innocence, made possible by his engaging drawing style and his famous granulated shading effects.

Max Collins' ***"Ms. Tree"*** series is reminiscent of the old detective characters which fell in line behind Superman or "The Bat-Man" in DC's Golden Age, and reads pretty much like an oversized comic strip. And it's heartening to see that the scripter of the once hyper-reactionary ***DICK TRACY*** strip has no quibble with depicting a couple sleeping together without them being married beforehand. It'll be interesting to see where ***"Ms. Tree"*** goes.

"Amber III," by Jim Starlin, takes the old song, ***"This Old Man,"*** and puts it through some rather grisly paces. The rhymes are

Howard Cruse's *"Death"* is entertaining and enlightening. "Cruse pops the sobriety of the subject with wit and even a sort of innocence."

IF YOU LET IT, STUFF LIKE THIS CAN PUT YOU IN A MORBID STATE OF MIND, BUT I LIKE TO LOOK AT IT MORE POSITIVELY!
THERE'S SOMETHING FASCINATING ABOUT DEATH AS A PROCESS! IT'S AN INTERESTING TRANSFORMATION —LIKE A SEED BECOMING A FLOWER!
I MEAN, TAKE THIS DEAD BODY HERE...
JOHN, WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU THERE, JOHN...?
©1981 Howard Cruse

Craig Russell's *"Chimera"* presents ten pages of "sometimes-faded pencil artwork with no story." Marlakan Joplin asserts that "in its completed state, it might have been a look at Russell at peak form."

sometimes strained ("Knick-knack patty-whack to my neck in muck/Boy, does this place ever suck"), and it's not too far beyond the material Starlin did years ago for ***STAR*BEACH***, but it's a nice job nonetheless.

Unfortunately, the Goshwow Factor is just as prevalent here as it has been in previous Eclipse projects. Here, it manifests itself in Mullaney's acceptance of material from artists who are coasting on their reputations. As with the slap-dash Frazetta cover of ***EPIC #1***, Paul Gulacy's ***"Cher Goes To War"*** cover is a self-indulgence which a more aware editor should have passed over.

The comparison with ***EPIC*** is not a casual one, as ***EPIC*** is the one magazine against which ***ECLIPSE*** will most often be compared. With that knowledge in mind, Marc Hempel's ***"Cartoon Man"*** becomes not only bad, but semi-plagiaristic as well, the idea having been used last year in ***EPIC #1***, and done to death many times before that. The two main similarities—the plot (one cartoon character explains to another cartoon character that they're both cartoon characters) and the fact that the characters are erased (or in Hempel's case, un-drawn) at the end of the story—can certainly provide a justifiable basis for legal action, and thus should have been avoided entirely. Surely "an innovative writer who uses a touch of irony," as Mullaney describes Hempel in the back of the book, could have come up with something more original!

Finally, we come to Craig Russell's ***"Chimera,"*** and that's where the Goshwow Factor ***really*** set in. What that story consists of, you see, is ten pages of sometimes-faded pencil artwork, with no story. Now granted, there ***are*** such things as artwork reproduced entirely from pencils, and there ***are*** such thing as wordless stories—but the point in this case is that ***"Chimera" needs both inking and scripting.*** Page six of the story, for example, depicts men on horseback. Their outlines are drawn and then blackened in by pencil scribbling—random scribbling, the kind that indicates to the inker that this figure is to be filled in entirely with black. And the large amounts of white space throughout the story, and a sequence at the bottom of the seventh page which alternates shots of—I think—the story's protagonist and his adversary (not to mention the fact that the story makes no sense at all in its present form) scream the intention of putting words and ink on this story. In its completed state, it might have been a look at Russell at peak form. As it stands, it's just pretentious dreck, underscoring Russell's laziness in presenting ***"Chimera"*** for sale while it was still incomplete, and Mullaney's gullibility for buying it.

And therein lies the danger of the Goshwow Factor. Eventually, it goes both ways. Artists and writers who grow accustomed to being able to sell ***anything*** they do to ***someone***, no matter how badly it's done, become lazy and complacent and start turning out crap on a regular basis. If slapdash artwork and hacked-out scripts sell for the same price as caring, conscientious craftsmanship, why ***shouldn't*** they go the easy route?

Hopefully, Mullaney will learn from the mistakes of ***ECLIPSE #1***. Overall, it's a good start and promises to get better. Watching writers and artists expand their horizons is always fascinating to do, and, given an editor who will work with the creators with the same care which Mullaney invests in their creations, those horizons could very well go on forever.

A scene from Marc Hempel's *"Cartoon Man."*

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A NUCLEAR

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"Blessings on thee, little man;
Barefoot Boy with cheek of tan."

Keiji Nakazawa was seven years old when the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima. His father, sister, and younger brother were killed, leaving him and his mother alone in total devastation, the ultimate war-born horror.

Thirty-five years later, Nakazawa's story, ***HADASHI NO GEN (BAREFOOT GEN)***, is finally reaching a Western audience. ***HADASHI NO GEN*** had already won a large and devoted following in Japan as a serial in a weekly comics magazine—which was later reprinted in a seven-volume collection of almost two thousand pages, and then transformed into a three-part live action movie. In America we find the square yellow paperbacks, or more likely Edu-Comics' ***GEN OF HIROSHIMA***, both translated by Project Gen.

The story itself deals with the Nakaoka family of Hiroshima (hiROshima), a very light fictionalization of the Nakazawas. Keiji himself is Gen (hard G, as in get), a Japanese Dennis the Menace: always in mischief, always in trouble. Gen's father, like Nakazawa's, is a sandal painter, barely managing to feed seven people in wartime Japan. In Gen's case things are made worse by his father's open anti-war stance. Anti-war, not pacifistic; when Nakaoka is arrested and tortured by the police he cries, "It's for Japan's sake I'm against the war!" Nakaoka sees no sense in fighting airplanes and machine guns with bamboo spears, in starving his children so the military can eat. Japan, Nakaoka says, is in the war at the behest of the industrialists and politicians who feel its hardships the least; the war is an excuse for Japanese economic control of China, Korea, and eventually the entire Asian sphere. The civic leaders prefer a public attitude of unquestioning obedience, and Nakaoka is severely beaten. Gen, in a long, bloody scene, finds the man responsible and bites off his finger! No, the Nakaokas are decidedly not pacifists.

This action takes place in Volume One of ***BAREFOOT GEN***, the English version. Its 284 pages are devoted to Hiroshima before the bomb. Gen and his family deal with lack of medicine, money, and food, with social ostracism and wartime hysteria. Only at the end does the bomb fall; Gen's father, sister, and brother are killed, and Gen himself is midwife to his newborn baby sister.[1] On the last page Gen's mother holds the infant up to see the holocaust, as Kunta Kinte beheld the Universe, and says: "Remember this, Tomoko! This is what took your father, brother and sister from us... this is ***war***—when you grow up, you must never let this happen again!"

Keiji Nakazawa is doing what he can to see it doesn't. A very youthful 41, Nakazawa, like Gen, is basically cheerful and lively, but intense on the subject of the bomb. "At first I didn't want to think about it. Like many others, I was concerned with day-to-day survival. The desire to do Gen first came when I saw the behaviour of the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission (ABCC). They came in almost immediately after the bomb to study the effects. They would haul the victims in and just observe their health deteriorate without preventing their dying. When my mother was examined, they took her blood but gave no drugs; they wouldn't hospitalize her. When she finally died, they wanted her internal organs for further study.[2] I refused, increasingly angry." The final shock, he says, came during the traditional cremation. In pre-war Japan the bones were kept separately in a place of worship. This was denied Mrs. Nakazawa; her bones disintegrated in the furnace. "I was shocked completely. Basically I wanted to tell everybody what happened."

What happened, in terms of the immediate effects of the A-Bomb, is the story of ***BAREFOOT GEN, VOLUME TWO***. The first half of this volume is a catalogue of damages: burned, mutilated people, slowly dying or disfigured for life; bloated bodies in the river; pustules giving birth to storms of flies; and "healthy" men struck down by concentrated radiation. This is perhaps the most important part of the whole saga, showing just what happens when you "nuke" another country. Nakazawa's cartoony style works to advantage here; an ultra-realistic portrayal of the piles of dead might be too gruesome in its effect.

In two separate instances, Gen finds people who are exact ringers for his brother Shinji and sister Eiko. "This didn't happen to me," says Nakazawa. "It grew out of Gen's strong desire to get his family back." The Shinji-dou-

[1] It would be impossible to speak of ***BAREFOOT GEN*** without giving part of the plot away. Ideally, the reader will have already read ***BG, VOLS. 1*** and ***2***; those who haven't can rest assured there's much more to the story than what I have set down.

[2] The ABCC is now defunct. The study of the A-bomb's effects is now being carried out by the Radiation Effects Research Foundation.

FAMILY

By Brad Walker

Keiji Nakazawa

ble, Ryuta, is the leader of a foraging pack of orphans. When the gang is arrested, Gen offers Ryuta a place in the Nakaoka hovel. "Think of it," he begs his mother, "as if we were helping Shinji."

Gen, with his indomitable high spirits, ready compassion and readier temper, is always helping or trying to help his fellows; this grows out of Nakazawa's work with burn victims. At the end of ***BAREFOOT GEN, VOLUME TWO*** Gen and Ryuta help a mummy-bound artist to recover, and in return he instills in Gen a desire to paint. In Nakazawa's case the victim was an author, but Nakazawa needed no urge to draw; he'd been drawing comics since the fourth grade.

"The year after the war," he says, "Tezuka[2] started coming out. I remember his first book, 250 pages: ***SHIN TAKARA JIMA*** (or ***NEW TREASURE ISLAND***); based on the Stevenson story, with pieces of ***ROBINSON CRUSOE*** and science fiction. Then after Occupation started we could get second-hand American comics: mostly ***BLONDIE*** and all the Walt Disney ones. But Tezuka is the biggest influence."

Nakazawa finished Junior High School at age 15. He stayed in Hiroshima, working as a sign-painter and practicing cartooning on his own. "There were no special schools for cartoonists in Japan at that time." He adds that there are now such schools, the first one having started in 1972, but he is not impressed by them.

He didn't make his first professioal sale until he was 22. He'd been sending material to Tokyo since he was 17, but nothing sold. So he went to Tokyo in person and sold ***"Spark 1,"*** an auto-racing strip, to ***SHONEN GAHO*** (***YOUNG CHILD***) magazine. That started him on a cartooning career that culminated in ***BARE-FOOT GEN.***

"GEN," says Nakazawa, "is my master-work; it has the most major theme of any of my work. I am not affiliated with any group; my job is cartooning. I write what I want to write; I write about my experiences."

HADASHI NO GEN was first serialized in ***SHONEN JANU*** (***YOUNG JUMP***) magazine. Most Japanese comics are weeklies, with ten-page or twenty-page chapters of adventure stories printed in black on white cheap newsprint (often green or orange paper). The adventures of individualized characters are periodically reprinted in albums the size and shape of the ***BAREFOOT GEN*** paperbacks. Japanese comics are called ***"manga"*** ("funny pictures") and a light, cartoony style is preferred, even for adventure stories. Only recently have a few artists gone to a more realistic style; their work is called ***"gekiga"***—"drama pictures."

Japanese comics have their own conventions, many exemplified in ***BAREFOOT GEN.*** Quite often the Nakaokas will be up against a policeman or someone in authority and that person's eyes will blank out. "This is from ***Kabuki*** theater," says Nakazawa. "An actor will roll his eyes back, letting only the whites show. This is not anger so much; a lack of eyeballs indicates a lack of heart, no human substance. It's pretty common in ***manga***."

Also common is the "shadow man" representing person or persons unknown, usually malevolent. The white eyes and teeth emphasize that the person is "not human enough."

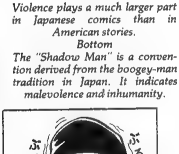
Bodily emissions are another feature of ***manga***. Very often a character is shown with a long transparent tear—coming out of his nose. Gen sometimes urinates where his tormentors least want him to. (***Manga***, as we shall see, reaches all ages; but even the "adult" comics don't show the male equipment in full amatory arousal. Dormant, or urinating, however, is quite acceptable; and anyone asking why is answered, "Why does Western culture emphasize sex?")

The manufacture of weekly episodes can produce some interesting contrasts. Will Eisner's work tells more in eight pages than many Cadence publications in seventeen (or twenty-two). But Japanese stories, with the emphasis on continuity, have a lot of "air" or duplicated, space-filling panels. For example, in ***BAREFOOT GEN, VOLUME TWO***, there is essentially no difference between the bottom panel on page 143 and the double-page spread, pp. 144-145; this is where one week ended and another began. There are also many scenes of people running, or walking, that have little real bearing on the story; they just make it easier for the ***mangaka*** ("cartoonist") to fill his quota.

Manga is also known for its violence. Gen bites the fingers off two people and is himself bitten in the scrotum. Scenes of torture and suicide are common. Gen's father knocks Akira downstairs while saying, "I love my children! All of them!" This is another example of why pacifists hesitate to endorse ***BAREFOOT GEN.*** (In pre-war Japan the father's word was law and the father didn't hesitate to enforce it. Father Nakaoka's most stringent punishment, tying Gen around the chest and hanging him on a "gallows," was actually quite common. "It never happened to me," says Nakazawa. "My father just tied my hands behind my back and shoved me into a closet.") That

[2]Osamu Tezuka, prominent in both comics and animation. Easily the biggest single influence in Japanese comics art. Americans know his ***CAPTAIN ATOM*** (***ASTRO BOY***) and ***JUNGLE EMPEROR*** (***KIMBA THE WHITE LION***). For more on Tezuka's work, see ***MINDROT #15*** and ***#16***.

MANGA TRADITIONS



Top
Blanked out eyes are derived from Kabuki theater.
Middle
Violence plays a much larger part in Japanese comics than in American stories.
Bottom
The "Shadow Man" is a convention derived from the boogey-man tradition in Japan. It indicates malevolence and inhumanity.

the characters prove so resilient under all this proves that the violence is (if only slightly) exaggerated.

From the moment it started, ***BAREFOOT GEN*** was a hit. In Japan, comics are written for and read by all age levels; adults feel no embarrassment in reading pictures of adventure, sex and violence. Nakazawa started with two groups of fans: all the A-bomb victims; and teachers who wanted to tell the facts about the war. ***HADASHI NO GEN*** ran for a year and a half in ***SHONEN JANPU***, at an average of twenty pages per week. These pages comprise the first four volumes in the Japanese edition, the first three in the English.

In ***BAREFOOT GEN, VOLUME THREE***, as yet unpublished, Gen continues his adjustment to postwar Hiroshima. His baby sister Tomoko is kidnapped. His elder brothers return, but there's little food and less money. And the Americans, led by one Gen. D. MacArthur, have landed.

"The Japanese have a legend," says Nakazawa, "about the ***Tengu***, long-nosed goblins that live in the woods and make mischief. We called these first G.I.s ***'Tengu'*** because American noses are longer than Japanese. And we didn't think of them as "white" men; to our eyes, Americans were really red—or really black." Nowadays, says Nakazawa, Japanese call themselves "yellow" and Caucasians "white." To the victor belongs the color scheme. But in prewar days the Japanese thought of themselves as "wheat" color, and this takes on added force when you realize the importance of wheat in ***BAREFOOT GEN***. The Nakaokas depend on their little wheatfield for survival. As Gen's father says, "Gen, no matter how many times you're stepped on, you should grow stronger, like the wheat!"

Gen meets his first G.I.s up close in ***BG, VOLUME THREE*** and goes ape over his first contact with chewing gum. ("Hey, Joe!") But the Occupation means food and supplies, politicians to skim off the top, and gangsters—***yakuza***—to run the black market. Ryuta gets co-opted into one group of ***yakuza*** during a gang war. Nakazawa has never read ***OLIVER TWIST***, but he depicts a Fagin operation with a few deadly "twists"; "With no authority in Hiroshima the ***Yakuza*** ran wild. Gang wars were common. War orphans were exploited as thieves and, more importantly, as hit men. They were taught to shoot on improvised ranges. The kids did the dirty work, but then, they were expendable." Ryuta eventually escapes, and uses his expertise to shoot some of Gen's enemies, almost as if he really **were** Shinji, back from the grave and thus able to kill with no repercussions. But this is not until after ***BG, VOLUME THREE***.

About this point Nakazawa was forced to wrap up his story. Some people felt the plot was growing too controversial, with some Americans in unsympathetic roles. But there was a more compelling reason: the Oil Shock of '73. Prices rose dramatically on oil and paper, and there were riots as supermarkets ran out of toilet paper. Magazines were forced to cut their allotments of pages, and Nakazawa lost

out by attrition. So, with a few loose ends dangling, he wrapped up the story of Gen.

But he found he couldn't leave it at that. The praise for ***GEN*** dwarfed that of anything else he'd previously done. Nakazawa himself felt it was his best work; there was still a lot more that needed to be said. So he sounded out other magazines. Acceptance came from an unusual source—***SHIMIN*** (Citizen's) ***MONTHLY***.

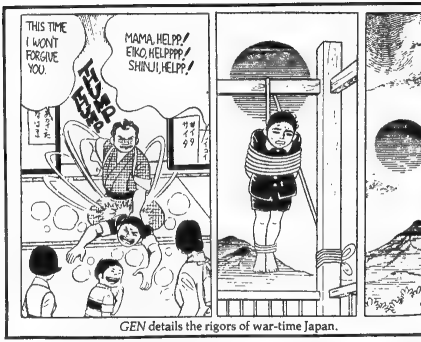
Manga wasn't a usual feature of ***SHIMIN***; the monthly was politically neutral, a hard-fact magazine dealing with environmental problems and consumerism. ***HADASHI NO GEN*** ran thirty-two pages a month. Nakazawa used his spare time to do another strip for ***SHONEN CHAMPION*** magazine. The strip was "***Gangaisu Gunta***" ("***Gunta the Fist***") about an 18-year-old streetfighter.

"My business has always been in the youth-comic trade," says Nakazawa. "That's why so many of my heroes are young kids. I've done teenage heroes for ***MANGA ACTION***. But I'm ***not*** interested in doing erotic comics, which are all the rage these days." Nakazawa has read ***TOM SAWYER*** and ***HUCKLEBERRY FINN***, but, he says, "I draw from my own experiences, the kids who grew up in my generation. To grow up in 1946 Hiroshima meant you ***had*** to be self-sufficient. Lots of kids did the things I wrote about."

In the Japanese edition the ***SHIMIN*** pages are Vols. Five through Seven, which would be enough for two volumes in the English series. Gen meets some old friends (and enemies), and tries to help whomever he can. This includes a writer who is trying to publish his account of the war; Gen gets it published (just before the author's death) and is harrassed by American officers for printing the truth about the bomb. The ABCC officials and their "guinea-pig" mentality also come under scrutiny. But this gets further and further from the bomb itself and more into the reconstruction, both physical and social, that followed. This is one reason why these pages are unlikely to be translated—at least right away.

In 1976 two Japanese, Masahiro Oshima and Yukio Aki, came to America to participate in the Trans-Continental Walk for Peace and Social Justice, a sort of "counter-Bicentennial" affair. They became involved with the War Resisters League; when questioned about Hiroshima, they found they didn't have the words. But a collection of ***HADASHI NO GEN*** was more than sufficient. The positive reaction kindled the idea that led to Project Gen, created to translate and disseminate Nakazawa's work.

Translating from Japanese is always difficult. The Japanese language is closest to Chinese (closer in writing than speech), but centuries of isolation on an island chain have caused the language to become rather ingrown. Nowadays it's often easier to translate first to English, then to Chinese! In fact, when Italian National television decided to run the first ***HADASHI NO GEN*** movie for Christmas 1980, the script had to be translated into English before Italian.*



GEN details the rigors of war-time Japan.

Project Gen is a very loose assortment of unpaid volunteers, numbering from five to twenty-five at any given moment. Working at odd hours for two and a half years they managed to translate and publish the first two volumes.

"There are more problems than simply translation," says Alan Gleason, an American in Tokyo. "Japanese comics are like Japanese books—they open, and read, from right to left. Why that is is a cultural thing. Why do Americans read left to right? But they do, so we have to take the pages apart panel by panel and repaste them Western-style; this makes for a little unevenness. Also, on page 91 of ***BG, VOLUME TWO***, in the fourth panel: The man says "Here you go, boy! Grab hold of this!" In the Japanese version Gen said something like, "OK, mister!" But for people reading left-to-right we put in "Gasp!" Sometimes we had to flop the picture (reversing the negative so the final print is the mirror image of the original copy) to keep the thread of conversation; but this was expensive, and we had to hold it down to about once per page. Why didn't we flop the whole page? Well, it would've been hard to letter, all signs would be backwards, everyone would be left-handed—it just wouldn't be

The horror of the bomb's aftermath is not curtailed by the cartoony style.

*All the ***GEN*** films were handled by Gendai Productions of Tokyo.

GEN has inspired several movies that are literally film adaptations of the comics. The lessons learned from Hiroshima are constantly being retaught to new generations.

true to Nakazawa's art. It's interesting that Japanese collections of translated American comics read left-to-right; interesting that they adapt to our style easier than we theirs. Our lettering was done by Toshihide Suzuki. He's a graphic artist, does posters and works for a printer. But this was his first time with Roman letters. He doesn't even read English."

Finally ***BG, VOLUME ONE*** was printed and sent to pacifist groups, environmentalists, and non-profit dealers in political materials. Sales were not impressive. Project Gen, already subsisting on donations, was using the last of these to prepare ***BG, VOLUME TWO*** when Leonard Rifas ("Corporate Crime") contacted them about publishing Gen in a smaller, more traditional format.

The results were phenomenal. ***GEN OF HIROSHIMA*** was the first 48 pages of Barefoot Gen relettered and with Zip-a-tone added to give that feeling of depth American eyes were felt to need. Pete Poplaski did the cover. The comic was written in up in several fan publications (with ***COMICS FEATURE***'s "by far the best," according to Nakazawa). Of course, in the smaller size it would take forever to print all of Gen. But the Rifas issue has turned out to be excellent advertising for the square yellow paperbacks Project Gen publishes—rather like the ***TEEN TITANS*** giveaway in ***DC COMICS***

I CAN'T DIE YET. I DON'T WANT TO DIE YET! MY MOTHER LIVES ONLY FOR THE JOY OF SEEING ME MARRIED, OR HOLDING HER GRANDCHILDREN IN HER LAP...
THIS IS VOLUNTARY, SO I WON'T FORCE YOU. BUT IT'S PRETTY AWFUL TO THINK THAT A JAPANESE BOY... I THOUGHT THAT MY BATTALION WOULD VOLUNTEER TO THE LAST MAN...
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO LOOK YOUR COMRADES IN THE EYES. THEY'RE ALL GIVING UP THEIR LIVES TO DEFEND THEIR COUNTRY...

GEN clearly endorses pacifism and highlights the social pressures exerted to ensure support for the war effort.

PRESENTS: People read ***GEN OF HIROSHIMA***, get caught up in the story, and buy the paperback rather than wait for the next issue. ***BG, VOLUME ONE*** was reprinted in June and already the thousand copes have sold out.

Which is rather a problem. ***BAREFOOT GEN*** is produced for donations, not profit. Project Gen plows all money back into translating and related projects. But it's long, hard work, the money runs out as soon as it comes in, and several people have left already. The main translator, JoAnne Elbinger, is touring India at the moment. When she returns in January, says Gleason, "the translation will be finished. And no one wants to publish ***BG, VOLUME THREE***. We don't have the money, and no one else has made an offer. We get letters from other countries saying they'll translate Gen into their mother-tongue if we'll send them money! All we can do with ***BG, VOLUME THREE*** is get the package put together for the printers and then try to find someone to publish it." Project Gen is nearly finished. There are no plans at present to translate the rest, what would be Volumes Four and Five.

Nakazawa is very pleased with all the attention Gen is getting from American comic book fans. "I think it's best to have people who don't give a shit about the bomb—at first —read Gen. Much better than preaching to the converted."

Most of Nakazawa's time these days is taken up with Gen. The only time he left Japan was to fly to Czechoslovakia, on the occasion of the first ***HADASHI NO GEN*** film playing at a film festival. It won the festival's Best Screenplay and Best Director Awards of 1975. There are now three ***HADASHI NO GEN*** films, all in live action. "I would have preferred animation, but that's too expensive these days. Japanese movies are made on a shoestring. But the Gen films did capture the spirit of the strip."

Nakazawa uses a flexible G-pen and ***Mozeshi*** paper. (***Mozeshi*** means "imitation handmade paper"; it's the highest quality machine-made.) But he spends little time cartooning. These days he travels the lecture circuit, speaking on the Hiroshima Experience. "Only in this past year has there been such a demand. You see, Japan is now on a dangerous path, more right-wing and militaristic; the government talks about increasing the Japanese 'self-defense' troops, and people are nervous about the Russian Occupation of the Kurile Islands. The popularity of Gen, my lectures, are part of a backlash against this trend. Kids, especially, want to hear about the bomb, want to hear what war was like. Many Japanese feel smug because Japan hasn't started any modern wars. But the big conglomerates, the steel and shipmaking industries, made a lot of money from the Korean and Vietnam wars. Many Japanese ***should*** know this, but they don't.

"Today's Americans," he goes on, "have not experienced war directly, on their own soil, in their own lives, at home. I want to communicate with them, I want them to understand the true horror of war, the destruction caused by nuclear weapons to people, how they affect the people they fall on."

What about movies like ***THE DEER HUNTER*** and ***APOCALYPSE NOW***? Don't they convey the horror of war?

"They don't at all. ***THE DEER HUNTER*** is about an ordinary group of people and a lot of fantasy elements, like that Vietnamese torture scene. ***APOCALYPSE NOW*** is on a certain philosophical level; I doubt that the average citizen can understand, or is interested in, anything on that level."

Of course, American movies, TV shows, and records are quite normal in present day Tokyo, a highly urban scene of blonde fashion models and McDonald's. "It all started with the Occupation. The G.I.'s radios and record players blared out their favorite music and it's just been going ever since. Ultimately it's not a good trend; more Japanese should become acquainted with the old culture." Ironically enough, one very popular example of the old culture is the theatrical release of the American mini-series ***SHOGUN***.*

Keiji Nakazawa is a happy man; ***HADASHI NO GEN*** is finished (for the second time) and is now reaching America. His older brothers (Koji and Akira in the story) are alive and happy and living in Hiroshima: one is a haberdasher, the other builds ships. He feels certain that people will hear his message; whether they will listen is something else again.

"Of course, the most obvious themes of ***BAREFOOT GEN*** are War and the Bomb. But it's also about how the ***hibakusha*** (A-bomb victims) survive and love, caring for each other, taking care of each other. The episodes of cruelty merely serve to bring them closer together. People have to struggle together to survive."

Gen, says Nakazawa, means roots, the source of life. Barefoot because "I like the image of a kid down to earth, literally; without recourse to anything else." Barefoot Gen at the roots of life survives with little help from anything else, and we are all the stronger. ●

*I'd like to thank Alan Gleason for his patience and help in preparing this article. He sat in on the interview with Nakazawa and served as translator.

*Pronounced show-goon, no matter what you called the Marvel mog. And does anyone else remember those little clear plastic robots someone filled with quasi-Chiclets and marketed as ***"Chewgum Warriors"***?

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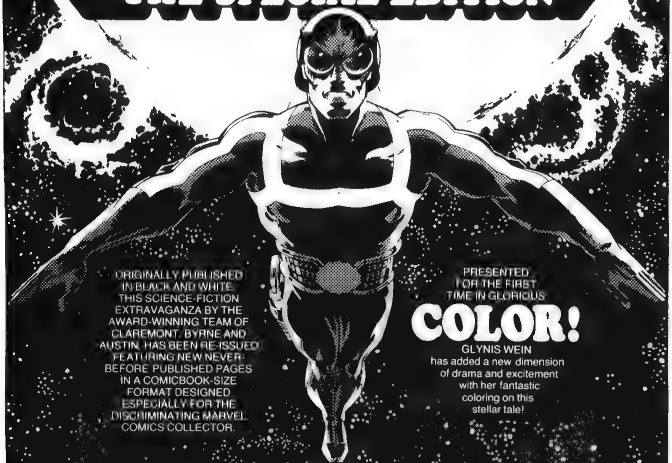

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The Super-Heroine as Chaos-Bringer

WOMEN and POWER

PART ONE

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by Margaret O'Connell

As noted Marvel Comics writer Chris Claremont is fond of pointing out, "Women in comics used to be just nothing at all." For better or worse, Claremont's own career as chief scripter and/or re-creator of such formidable females as Ms. Marvel, Misty Knight and Colleen Wing of ***IRON FIST***, and Storm and especially Phoenix of The X-Men, has done much to change this situation. Most notably, Claremont's revamping of Marvel Girl into Phoenix ushered in a new wave of strong-willed, high-powered Marvel superheroines. 1979-80 alone saw the launching of a new book starring The She-Hulk and the introduction of a number of lesser-known floating female guest stars like the cosmic-powered Her (***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE #61-63***) and the savage Snowbird (***X-MEN #121-122, 139-140***), one of the few beings besides The Hulk capable of defeating the virtually invulnerable Wendigo. Once the trend was firmly established, the number of highly aggressive new female characters multiplied so rapidly that at one point in early 1980, Marvel boasted an array of awesomely impressive superheroines ranging right up to the power level of Galactus and The Silver Surfer.

Such an assemblage of extremely powerful superwomen had never before existed at any comics company in the history of the medium. Unfortunately, Marvel's presentation of these high-powered heroines has hardly been calculated to reassure the many people who still consciously or subconsciously fear what might happen if so erratic and emotional a creature as a woman ever found her way to the White House, the Supreme Court, or any other significant seat of real-life temporal power. Arrogant and callous at best, at their worst these new high-caliber heroines are prone to fits of destructive power-madness in which they become more of a menace to society and the known universe than any of the villains they fight. Underlining the discouraging conclusions about women and power these characters' careers suggest is the fact that in the case of the two most spectacular of these superheroines, The She-Hulk and Phoenix/Dark Phoenix, the woman's own ambition and desire for power are closely linked with her abuse of it. Both Jennifer (She-Hulk) Walters and Jean (Phoenix) Grey conform to the usual origin pattern for super-heroes (as opposed to super-villains) by having great power thrust upon them without their own seeking. However, once each woman acquires this power, her dangerous illusion that she can control it and use it for her own ends, however noble, inspires her to repeatedly venture into situations which cause her to experience extreme power highs in which her civilized inhibitions about preserving sentient life, etc., are relaxed and her destructive impulses are given free rein.

The unfavorable implications of recent presentations of these and other extremely powerful super-heroines are not confined to the specific female characters involved. The continuing gross under-representation of women in comics, especially as super-heroines (of whom there is still only one for every five or six male heroes), causes the personalities and behavior of the few female super-characters who do exist to be interpreted as representative of their entire sex in a way that the actions of individual male characters are not. This tendency to see the individual superwoman as Everywoman becomes even greater when the superwoman in question is one of the handful of female characters to attain genuine prominence and familiarity to even casual readers. Thus, the fact that two out of the three Marvel superheroines functioning as headliners of monthly series as of Summer, 1980 (**i.e.**, Spider-Woman, The She-Hulk, and Phoenix, who effectively dominated ***X-MEN*** whenever she appeared), as well as several of the new second-string heroines who were being spotlighted as guest stars at the time, were hyperaggressive power junkies could hardly fail to suggest to the less thoughtful readers that for women, great power is inextricably linked with great irresponsibility and

destructiveness.

The subliminal motif of women as incapable of handling power, inevitably becoming uncontrollably destructive whenever they try to, is nothing new in comics. The Stan Lee-scripted ***"Medusa"*** story from the 1960s reprinted in ***THE SUPERHERO WOMEN*** (from ***SPIDER-MAN #62***) is a striking example of a strong-willed, powerful woman using that power to smash everything in sight, with no provocation whatsoever. Spider-Woman is also presented as essentially irrational and destructive in her early appearances, especially her 1977 intro story in ***MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #32*** (written by Archie Goodwin), in which she accidentally kills not one, but two men she believes she loves (a fellow HYDRA agent and a young man from the Balkan village near the High Evolutionary's mountain headquarters) by involuntarily lashing out with killing-strength venom blasts when startled. This emphasis on Spider-Woman's violent temper and trigger-happy reactions was carried over into the early issues of her own title, which began publication in 1978, scripted by Marv Wolfman.

Another, more recent female character distinguished by her tendency to zap first and ask questions later is Her. Rather than deign to stop and explain the basically harmless intentions behind her apparent kidnapping of Alicia Masters, Her spends most of her March-May 1980 guest slot in ***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE*** irritably striking down anyone who gets in her way. Besides being even more arrogantly autocratic than Moondragon (who also guest-starred in these issues), Her has an additional strike against her as far as longtime readers are concerned: she intends to resurrect Warlock, whom she views as her perfect mate, from the dead. As can be plainly seen from the mail ***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE*** received while the outcome of Her's ultimately unsuccessful quest was still in doubt, this presumptuous and ill-advised plan was regarded by many fans as nothing less than a blasphemous desecration of a revered character and series which should have been left to rest in honorable and hard-earned peace.

However, the second-string superwoman who most clearly exemplifies the more specialized recent trend toward heroines who are not particularly overbearing or destructive in themselves, but become deeply and inexorably corrupted by excessive power soon after acquiring it, is Snowbird. A member of the Canadian supe. team known as Alpha Flight, Snowbird is a shape-shifter whose behavior in her unearthly super-powered guise is disturbingly similar to that of the Wolverine back when he was still an unrepentant homicidal maniac, before his abrupt and implausible retroactive rehabilitation in ***X-MEN #139-140*** (Nov.-Dec. '80). Snowbird's peculiar shape-shifting powers have one major built-in defect: "I assume the persona of whatever [animal] creature I become. If I am consumed with bloodlust [as an animal], I could become as terrible a threat to my friends as Wendigo himself" (***X-MEN #140***, p. 16 of an unpaginated story). Predictably, this is exactly what happens in the ensuing battle between Snowbird, in the form of

BUT PERHAPS I CAN SHAPE-CHANGE INTO THE NEXT BEST THING.
THERE IS GREAT DANGER IN THIS. I ASSUME THE PERSONA OF WHATEVER CREATURE I BECOME. IF I AM CONSUMED BY BLOODLUST, I COULD BECOME AS TERRIBLE A THREAT TO MY FRIENDS AS WENDIGO HIMSELF. BUT I CAN SEE NO ALTERNATIVE. THE RISK MUST BE TAKEN.
AKL MOOSAK— SPIRIT OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS— GRANDFATHER— HELP ME! GIVE ME STRENGTH!

Left, Her, and above, Snowbird: "...high-caliber super-heroines as weak-conscienced adrenalin addicts."

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a vicious white wolverine (the real Wolverine being unavailable at the moment), and the supernatural man-eating monster Wendigo. At the conclusion of the fight, Snowbird, her savage animal persona still in complete control, stands snarling over her opponent's unconscious body, eagerly awaiting the chance for further slaughter—not to mention preventing the magical restoration of Wendigo to his human form, which is the only thing that will put him out of action more than momentarily. This stalemate continues until Wolverine—of all people—is able to talk her down from the plateau of inhuman battle-madness she has attained, allowing the more rational side of her personality to re-emerge.

The increasing trend toward presenting high-caliber superheroines as weak-conscienced adrenalin addicts who trip out on gratuitous violence is even more clearly exemplified by The She-Hulk, especially as she is portrayed in the first few issues of her own comic. The green-skinned anti-heroine's origin story, scripted by Stan Lee, attempts to cash in on the supposed power fantasies of recently-liberated female readers by portraying The She-Hulk herself as the embodiment of crusading lawyer Jennifer Walters' own daydreams of being big and strong enough to solve all the problems of the world singlehanded. Walters' suicidal over-eagerness to succeed, both as an attorney and an altruistic racket-buster, becomes evident a mere five pages into the story, when she blithely tells her long-lost cousin Bruce Banner that in order to help clear an underworld client whom mob boss Nick Trask has framed, she has deliberately spread rumors that she has secret evidence implicating Trask himself in a murder. When Banner protests, "But if Trask really is a killer, he may try to silence you—permanently!", Jennifer naively laughs off his sensible concern with the exclamation, "C'mon! Those things only happen in movies!" (p. 6). Unfortunately for her, they also happen in comic books, as the brash young lawyer learns the hard-way when she is critically wounded by Trask's gun-wielding thugs mere moments later.

Much to the regret of discerning readers everywhere, Jennifer is saved by Banner, who gives her an emergency transfusion of his own gamma-irradiated blood, She eventually winds up in the hospital to recuperate from her wounds. Here, forcibly reminded of her own vulnerability by her recent close call, the shaken attorney tries to take her mind off her problems by dreaming up new schemes to nail Trask, fretting, "If only I weren't so frail, so powerless..." (p. 18). This reverie is abruptly interrupted by the three thugs, who have returned disguised as hospital orderlies to finish the job of rubbing her out. But to their astonished horror, their attempt to suffocate Jennifer with chloroform simply causes the newly gamma-infected girl to metamorphose into a fearsome female Hulk.

Chasing the terrified crooks out of the hospital, demolishing walls and elevators and otherwise doing thousands of dollars' worth of property damage, the Hulked-out Jennifer peremptorily shoves doctors and nurses aside, exclaiming, "Out of the way—all of you! Nobody stops the She-Hulk! Nobody!" She continues this paean to her own power as she stomps menacingly down the stairs, proclaiming, "I never felt like this before! I can do anything! I'm throbbing with power!" (p. 26). Finally, when she catches up to the three hit men, the She-Hulk smashes the wheels out from under their getaway car, crowing exult-

THE BLOOD TRANSFUSION MUST HAVE CAUSED IT! I'VE BECOME A GAMMA-RAY MONSTER-- LIKE POOR DOC!
BUT I'LL LEARN TO LIVE WITH IT! FROM NOW ON WHATEVER JENNIFER WALTERS CAN'T HANDLE-- THE SHE-HULK WILL DO!
STARTS!
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"Jen seems less troubled by her inexorably altered fate than grimly exultant at the prospect of utilizing her fearsome newly-acquired power..."

antly, "I have the strength now—The power! I can do anything! ANYTHING!" (p. 27). After terrorizing the groveling crooks into confessing their crime—and Trask's—Jennifer, her Hulkish powers fading and her appearance returning to normal, hurries back to her hospital room. She reaches it just in time to be reassured by a scandalized nurse that "that female savage's" rampage is now over. Arms folded resolutely across her chest, Jennifer thinks, "How wrong she is! It isn't over! It's just beginning!.. The blood transfusion must have caused it! I've become a gamma-ray monster like poor Doc [*i.e.*, Bruce Banner]! But I'll learn to live with it! From now on, whatever Jennifer Walters can't handle—the She-Hulk will do!" (p. 30).

Despite her talk of "poor Doc" and "learning to live with" the fact that she's become "a gamma-ray monster," Jen seems less troubled by her inexorably altered fate than grimly exultant at the prospect of utilizing her fearsome newly-acquired power to do everything she's ever wanted to do, but couldn't. This calm acceptance of Hulkishness as at worst a mixed blessing, rather than a curse, is just the opposite of Bruce Banner's reaction to his gamma ray-induced transformation. As the Hulk, Banner gloats over his newfound strength even more than his female counterpart does, even giving serious consideration to the idea of conquering the world. As he tells Rick Jones, "I am glad it happened! I'd rather be me, than that puny weakling [Banner]!... [In this form] I don't need anybody! With my strength—my power—the world is mine!" (***ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS***, p. 90, reprinted from ***HULK #1***). But when he reverts to his normal self, Banner is devastated by the knowledge that he is now condemned to lead a Jekyll/Hyde existence. As he desolately explains to Rick, "How do I know I won't change once more? How do I know I won't ***keep*** changing... into that brutal, bestial mockery of a human—that creature which fears nothing... which despises reason and worships power!... Here I sit, helplessly, fearing that I may again become—the Hulk!!" (p. 93). Later, as the scientist continues to bemoan his tragic fate, he refers to the Hulk in further terms of revulsion as "that inhuman creature" and "a marauding, savage brute" (p. 96). Later still, when the monstrous Gargoyle, who has kidnapped Banner and Rick in order to learn the secret of the Hulk for Russia, laments, "I'd give anything to be normal! Anything!", Banner immediately responds, "So would I!" (p. 102).

Admittedly, Jennifer Walters seems to have less reason for anxiety and guilt about her green-skinned other self's activities than Bruce Banner does. Excessive as it is, The She-Hulk's terrifying violence at least has some legitimate moral justification. This was not the case with the original Hulk, whose contemptuous impulse to crush any and all "puny humans" who got in his way, even the helpful Rick Jones (***ORIGINS OF MARVEL COMICS***, p. 90), was inspired by a Magneto-like conviction that such "weak, helpless creatures" deserved to be destroyed simply because compared to him, they were "insects" (pp. 98, 84). Even the crudely-delineated She-Hulk of the Stan Lee origin issue lacks this potentially genocidal indiscriminate hostility toward humanity in general. Unlike the original version of her male counterpart, The She-Hulk is motivated from the beginning by essentially the same drives as the grimmer sort of conventional heroes, such as The Batman—hatred of evil-doers and a desire to put them out of business permanently (rather than a more constructive wish to protect the innocent, which is the primary motivation of less vengeance-oriented, vigilantelike superheroes, such as Spider-Man. The distinctive Hulkish feature of the green-skinned woman-monster is her urge to go to any lengths, however violent (and, by implication, potentially lethal), in dispensing of her own brand of rough justice. Unfortunately, this end-justifies-the-means philosophy of crimefighting seems to be at least partially shared by the She-Hulk's supposedly more rational, restrained half, Jennifer Walters (whom one would logically expect to be at least as punctilious in her attitude toward extra-legal activities as Bruce Banner, since she is an attorney herself). Instead, Walters seems quite willing to take the law into her own hands as The She-Hulk, initially expressing no concern that the green-skinned giantess' unrestrained ruthlessness in the pursuit of criminals may lead her to sink to their level of disrespect for human life, both innocent and guilty. With Lee's origin providing the savage She-Hulk with an alter ego who not only seems as unperturbed by the moral pitfalls of violent vigilantism as The She-Hulk herself is, but is positively eager to unleash her own personal gamma-ray monster whenever her normal self is faced with a situation she cannot cope with, this new "super-heroine" seemed all too likely to become a slightly less cold-blooded female counterpart of such merciless crook-killers as The Punisher and the Michael Fleisher version of The Spectre.

Evidently disturbed by the origin story's intimations of The She-Hulk as She-Punisher, regular scripter David Anthony Kraft (who took over with issue #2) spent much of the next eleven issues toning down Jen's enthusiasm for Hulkish power and giving The She-Hulk qualms about beating her opponents to a pulp even when they were criminals. Kraft's very first issue burst the bubble of Jen's Lee-induced fantasies of She-Hulkish omnipotence. When the misguided intervention of Jen's loudmouthed legal rival, "Buck" Bukowski, prevents the She-Hulk from saving her best friend, Jill, from dying in a car crash, the ambitious young lawyer learns that despite her proud boast, "From now on, whatever Jennifer Walters can't handle—The She-Hulk will do!", there are some obstacles even the strongest woman in the world cannot overcome.

The drawbacks of her new tendency to metamorphose into a raging giantess whose violent impulses are painfully difficult to control are further borne in upon Jennifer in issue #3, when news reports that The She-Hulk has murdered three mobsters seem to confirm her fears that her savage new persona may take over and go out and kill people while Jen herself is asleep. Although Jen soon learns that The She-Hulk actually hasn't killed anybody yet, the blind violence of her reaction when she discovers the gangland frame-up behind the false news report reinforces her newfound awareness that there is a distinct possibility she will become a murderess if she doesn't use her reason to restrain the greatly heightened emotional outbursts she experiences as the She-Hulk. Discovering that her supposed victims have actually been killed by a mechanical imitation She-Hulk controlled by Trask, the enraged gamma-ray giantess shouts vengefully, "I've been branded a killer—set up by Nick Trask for a string of murders in my name! So I might as well go on a slaying spree—what have I got to lose? Tonight, Trask is going to see just how savage The She-Hulk can really be! I'll take Trask's head—just as I took this trophy of the murder machine he sent mas-

querading as me!" (*SHE-HULK* #4, p. 1). At this point, her more rational Jennifer Walters side makes The She-Hulk realize the appalling import of what she has just said. She pulls back, horrifiedly repudiating her murderous sentiments of a moment before in a speech which culminates in a statement of purpose reminiscent of Spider-Man's famed motto, "With great power comes great responsibility": "No! Mustn't let my temper—turn me into a monster—like him [Trask]! Got to keep the Hulkish side of my nature under control! If I hope to prove worthy of my incredible power —must subordinate strength to strategy!" (p. 2).

This reference to The She-Hulk's concern about "proving worthy of my power" is the first concrete indication that Jennifer has realized that being a super-powered righter of wrongs involves larger, more complex responsibilities and issues than she had envisioned in her original egotistical daydream of saving the world singlehanded through sheer brute force. Kraft's depiction of Jen's changing views and maturing personality permits a gradual restatement of her attitude toward becoming The She-Hulk that emphasizes admirable, though naive, idealism, rather than the more self-centered responses Stan Lee's origin script had presented as primary: gratified overweening ambition and selfish enjoyment of ego-tripping by means of the exercise of vast power, only incidentally in a good cause.

Ruefully thinking back to her origin after the above-described fit of murderous rage, The She-Hulk does not dwell on the megalomaniacal thrill of realizing she now has the strength to do virtually anything, as she did at the time, but focuses instead on her subsequent decision about how to use this power for good: "I remember the sheer sense of triumph—the exhilaration—I felt the very first time I turned into—The She-Hulk! I swore to right wrongs—to capture criminals who were beyond the law's reach—beyond my reach as Jennifer Walters, attorney!" (*S-H* #4, p. 8).

In a later story, Jen realizes that by acquiring the power she had always longed for, she has become not the savior of downtrodden humanity she had dreamed of becoming, but a rampaging menace to society:

> "When I was a girl, growing up, I dreamed of righting wrongs, having the power to change. My dream came true, but not the way I wanted! Thanks to my power, I'm a fugitive—falsely accused of murder. Yet that's nothing compared to the searing rage that instantly overwhelms me—even over the least little annoyance! For the first time in my life, I feel I'm losing control—and there's no way I can help myself!" (*SHE-HULK* #9, p. 6)

However, in vivid contrast to the hopeless situation of her cousin Bruce Banner, it turns out that Jennifer's ever-worsening temper and increasingly unpredictable and uncontrollable metamorphoses into the She-Hulk are not unavoidable side effects of her basic Hulkishness, but the results of "a sub-molecular chain reaction coursing wildly through her bloodstream... a dangerous degenerative disease" (*S-H* #9, p. 10). This disease, which is apparently some kind of immune reaction to the transfusion of Banner's gamma-irradiated blood, is somehow cured by Dr. Michael Morvius in issues #11-12 without stripping Jennifer of either gamma radiation or the Hulkish powers it confers.

After this, although The She-Hulk remains decidly ill-tempered, especially when attacked, she gains sufficient mastery over her turbulent emotions to resist yielding to the urge to attempt to kill crooks or to terrorize essentially innocent people who are ill-advised enough to irritate her. As Jennifer Walters, she also gains the ability to make the transformation from one identity to the other at will, instead of involuntarily Hulking out over every petty annoyance of everyday life. However, with Jen's newly-acquired ability to become the She-Hulk at will comes the ever-increasing temptation to remain in that unstoppable super-powerful form permanently, especially now that she knows The She-Hulk is not a murderess and, in fact, is basically good at heart. Indeed, despite the distinct edge of ruthless near-murderousness she still attains in the heat of battle, the reformed, post-cure She-Hulk is generally more of a diamond in the rough along the lines of the gruff but good-hearted Thing or the peremptory but noble Sub-Mariner than the petulant, pea-brained juggernaut, ever-ready to destroy everything and everyone in sight, that her cousin Bruce Banner becomes whenever he is placed in a stressful situation.

AND SO THE ARRAIGNMENT IS ARRANGED IN THE COURT OF JUDGE ABRAHAM BRIGGS FOR 10 A.M. TOMORROW MORNING! BRIGGS HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING A HARD MAN IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT!
WHOA-- I WAS BEING SARCASTIC! I'M NOT GOING TO BE A WEIRD CRIMINAL!
I'LL JUST CALM DOWN AND TURN BACK INTO JEN! SHE-HULK OUT!
YOU'LL COME WITH US, SHE-HULK! OR WE'LL SHOOT YOU FULL OF HOLES!
I'LL JUST CALM DOWN AND TURN BACK INTO JEN! SHE-HULK OUT!
ONE STEP CLOSER AND I'LL SMASH YOU INTO SMITHEREENS!
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"With Jen's newly-acquired ability to become The She-Hulk at will comes the ever-increasing temptation to remain in that unstoppable super-powered form permanently."

However, although The She-Hulk in a bad mood now comes across more like a dangerously strong, willful twelve-year-old accustomed to having her own way than a trigger-happy impulse-murderer, her eager enjoyment of her Hulkish near-omnipotence still has distinctly ominous overtones. This is especially clear on those occasions when Jen/The She-Hulk, though no longer inclined to automatically indulge in orgies of destruction, becomes so intoxicated with the limitless freedom and power she enjoys as The She-Hulk that she resists the idea of ceasing to trip out on her own omnipotence long enough to concentrate on anything else, or to reverse the transformation and return to the strife-ridden everyday life of Jennifer Walters. Trapped in a situation where she has to change back into Jennifer, The She-Hulk is unnervingly prone to declaring her intention of someday displacing her less powerful other self entirely and remaining the strongest woman in the world fulltime—a possibility even Jen herself finds disturbingly attractive. As the cornered She-Hulk exclaims in issue #16:

YOU TALK FAST AND SMART, LITTLE MAN, BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T GIVEN ME A GOOD REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T SQUASH YOU FLAT!
GET TO THE POINT, RUNT!
THE POINT IS THIS -- ASK YOURSELF, "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?" IF THE ANSWER IS NOTHING--
WHY, YOU--! NO ONE CALLS THE SHE-HULK A FOOL--!
PUT ME DOWN! YOU'RE ONLY ANGRY BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING IS TRUE!
WHAT WOULD YOU GAIN IF FLEETING SATISFACTION FOR YOURSELF? THAT'S ALL SOCIETY WOULD STILL SHUN YOU!
THEN YOU'RE A FOOL!
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"...The She-Hulk has the equivalent of Bruce Banner's brain and self-control superimposed over the rash impulses of a super-powerful spoiled brat."

> "Don't want to change back to my other identity—Jen Walters. I despise the idea! But, with so many cops patrolling—it's the only way! Hate to concentrate... hate to feel the gut-wrenching pain splitting me apart... re-forming me! Each time I vow that it'll be the last time!" (p. 7)

Merely human once again, Jennifer realizes that the transformation has only tempered these She-Hulkish sentiments, rather than eliminating them:

> "Dr. Morbius said the change would be painful... but he only referred to the physical discomfort! He knew nothing of the mental anguish I suffer! Even though I'm Jen Walters again, The She-Hulk is still within me—demanding to be free! I remember... and feel too much... her anger, her outrage, her alienation... I'm me, but I'm also her! I want to lash out at the injustice of everything! It's wrong, but at the same time, it feels so right! The rage ... so overwhelming! The power... so awesome! God help me, but I almost wish I always was—her!" (p. 7)

Although both halves of The She-Hulk's personality have been toned down and made more constructive and responsible by David Anthony Kraft, the new scripter was unable to remove all traces of the ignoble and apparently supposedly distinctly feminine (since it is not shared by the current version of Jennifer's male counterpart) powerlust Stan Lee injected into the new super-heroine when he wrote her origin. The mere fact that after all the serious trouble becoming a super-powered gamma-ray monster has caused for her and those close to her, the giant green-skinned version of Jen can still selfishly proclaim, "I don't want to change! I like being The She-Hulk! I'm going to stay The She-Hulk!" (*S-H #15*, p. 10), gives her "heroism" a decidely ambiguous and non-altruistic twist rarely evident in the highly duty-conscious musings of more traditional super-powered protagonists.

The fact that The She-Hulk has the equivalent of Bruce Banner's brain and self-control superimposed over the rash impulses of a super-powerful spoiled brat, while the original, male Hulk has only the latter, does make her better suited to serve as a sympathetic "good guy" protagonist for a largely juvenile audience than her brutish, near-mindless male cousin. However, Jennifer's comparatively complete conscious control over her own Hulkish actions makes her responsibility for whatever excessive and inappropriate behavior she still does indulge in that much greater, and, incidentally, that much more likely to be misperceived by immature readers as morally acceptable (because "rationally" decided upon by a basically well-intentined character who was supposedly in her right mind at the time).

As suggested earlier, the fact that even now, The She-Hulk is still one of only three Marvel super-heroines who have their own solo titles (Spider-Woman and newcomer Dazzler being the other two), with the consistent sustained exposure to the limelight that implies, ensures that The She-Hulk's moral flaws, particularly her ambitious desire for and glorying in intoxicating and potentially deadly raw power, are that much more likely to be perceived as characteristic of women in general. Under these circumstances, it is no light matter when the character who is so far the most viable and best-selling of Marvel's meager handful of solo super-heroines (at least until the newly-introduced **DAZZLER** comic has been on the stands long enough to produce sales figures of any accuracy) is inescapably tainted with the all-consumingly narcissistic power-madness also displayed by a significant percentage of the minor heroines who have been prominently showcased recently. The probability that as a result of all this, the average reader exposed to the Marvel comics of the past four years, especially those from 1979 to the present, will subconsciously make the connection between very powerful, dynamic female characters and destructive megalomania is very high. Especially when these negative associations between women and power are further reinforced by the insane genocidal rampages of the unofficial star of **X-MEN**, one of Marvel's most popular and critically-acclaimed titles—Dark Phoenix. ●

End Part I

To be continued with a look at **DARK PHOENIX**

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SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

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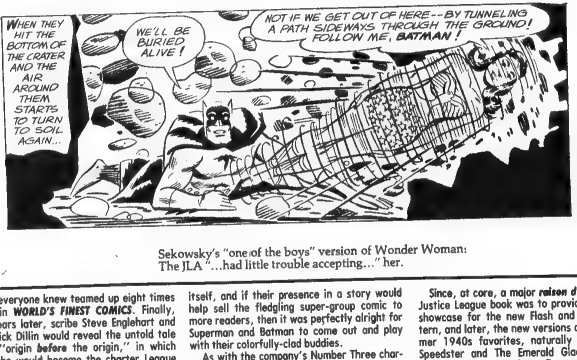
by Murray R. Ward

As we examine the teams of the 1960s in this continuing series, we will shift our focus back and forth from the Marvel Comics Group to DC (National Periodical Publications) and back again, with side-trips into the various other comics publishers of that decade. After last issue's look at Marvel's flagship team, The Fantastic Four, we turn the spotlight this time on the long-time #1 DC group, The Justice League of America.

I. ORIGINS

As far as the behind-the-scenes "real-life" origins of various comics features go, that of The Justice League is most elementary to figure out. Having revived first The Flash, and then Green Lantern from the 1940s, it was inevitable that DC, in the editorial persona of Julius Schwartz, would also bring the equivalent of ***ALL STAR COMICS***, a book featuring a team composed of all their top characters in group adventures. Since the slimmer size of comics in the 1960s as compared to the 1940s had all but eliminated the former DC line of anthology or "umbrella" titles which gathered a number of features under one four-color roof (only those featuring Superman/Batman-related characters, such as ***ACTION***, ***DETECTIVE***, ***ADVENTURE***, and ***WORLD'S FINEST*** survived), there was little sense, it then seemed, in bringing back a book called ***ALL STAR***, whose title had little to do with the characters it featured. Rather, the new book would bear the name of the super-group itself. And since, just as he had changed the costumes, secret identities, and backgrounds of Flash and GL, editor Julius Schwartz saw fit to rename the group to which they would belong, the chummy-but-official-sounding Justice Society became the militant-and-official-sounding Justice League, and the book in which they held forth was named ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA***. Like the other revival features before them, the JLA "won their wings" after a trial flight in one of the showcase magazines set aside for the purpose of introducing new concepts. From the beginning, though, the Justice League was a strip ready and raring to go. Not content to wait till Green Lantern graduated to his own book first, they were launched while he was still awaiting word of his promotion, and equally impatient to sit still while a berth in ***SHOWCASE*** opened up for them, they made their debut in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD*** holding forth in issues #28, 29, and 30 of that title, before (hardly unpredictably) moving on to their own book.

The origin story as it "happened" on Earth-One (as the world of the JLA stories became known, after it was revealed that the earlier JSA tales had taken place on an alternate world, Earth-Two), however, was not so simple. In their first story, in ***B&B #28***, the team appeared full-blown with no hint of an origin whatsoever; unconsciously or not, they were following the "tradition" of their predecessors in the Justice Society, whose team lacked a first-meeting tale for over 35 years. In this inaugural Justice League case, as in so many others over the later years, one member, in this case Aquaman, became aware of a world-threatening alien menace and used his secret signalling device to call the entire assembly of super-beings into action against it. When, after months of reader requests, the ***"Origin of the Justice League"*** appeared in the book's ninth issue, it too followed the by-now-standard formula of series author Gardner Fox (ably assisted by artist Mike Sekowsky with inks by Bernard Sachs (interiors) and Murphy Anderson (covers), except that it was made clear that the heroes who fought the (again) alien threat were meeting for the first time, except for Superman and Batman, of course,

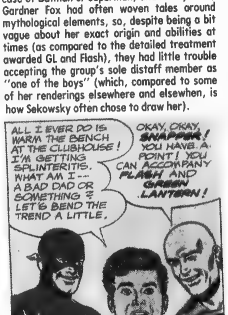

WHEN THEY HIT THE BOTTOM OF THE CRATER AND THE AIR AROUND THEM STARTS TO TURN TO SOIL AGAIN...
WE'LL BE BURIED ALIVE!
NOT IF WE GET OUT OF HERE -- BY TUNNELING A PATH SIDEWAYS THROUGH THE GROUND! FOLLOW ME, BATMAN!
© 1981 DC Comics

Sekowsky's "one of the boys" version of Wonder Woman: The JLA "...had little trouble accepting..." her.

who as everyone knew teamed up eight times a year in **WORLD'S FINEST COMICS**. Finally, many years later, scribe Steve Englehart and artist Dick Dillin would reveal the untold tale of the "origin **before** the origin," in which those who would become the charter League members, together with practically every other heroic character extant in a DC comic of the late 1950s, teamed up to investigate a mysterious **new** super-character, the first of the second-generation crusaders, J'Onn J'Onzz, The Manhunter from Mars.

Despite the several and at times conflicting recollections of how they first got together, there is no doubt as to who was in attendance at that first Justice League meeting. As DC's Number One and Two characters of long standing, respectively, there was no question but that Superman and Batman would be among the charter members. However, whether to preserve yet another old JSA tradition in which The Man of Steel and The Caped Crusader were members in name only of the all-star group and seldom attended meetings or collaborated with anyone but each other on cases, or simply to avoid creating an unnecessary link with characters controlled by other editors, Julie Schwartz chose to leave the two heavyweight heroes out of most early stories. For a time, no one seemed to mind, as the absence of the popular duo left room for the newer characters to shine in more pages apiece, given the abbreviated page-count (as compared with the gigantic **ALL STAR**) they had to work with; likewise, until Schwartz's own "New Look" campaign and the subsequent TV series, no great contingent of Bat-fans arose to demand equal time for a hero without any actual powers with his costumed peers, and of course, had Superman been in every story, his overabundance of abilities would have left little for his comrades to do. Eventually, however, someone upstairs seems to have nudged the JLA creative staff into the realization that the 1960s were no longer the days of yore when DC/All-American was a house divided against itself, and if their presence in a story would help sell the fledgling super-group comic to more readers, then it was perfectly alright for Superman and Batman to come out and play with their colorfully-clad buddies.

As with the company's Number Three character and the only other major survivor of the late Golden Age decimation of the super-hero ranks, Wonder Woman was also an inevitable choice for the starting line-up. Her being the "property" of another editor didn't seem to bother the creators as much as it had in the case of Batman or Superman, and in any case, Gardner Fox had often woven tales around mythological elements, so, despite being a bit vague about her exact origin and abilities at times (as compared to the detailed treatment awarded GL and Flash), they had little trouble accepting the group's sole distaff member as "one of the boys" (which, compared to some of her renderings elsewhere and elsewhen, is how Sekowsky often chose to draw her).


ALL I EVER DO IS WARM THE BENCH AT THE CLUBHOUSE! I'M GETTING SPLINTERITIS. WHAT AM I -- A BAD DAD OR SOMETHING? LET'S BEND THE TREND A LITTLE.
OKAY, OKAY, SHAZAM! YOU HAVE A POINT! YOU CAN ACCOMPANY FLASH AND GREEN LANTERN!

Snapper Carr and his characteristic dialect. ©1981 DC Comics

Since, at core, a major **raison d'etre** of the Justice League book was to provide a further showcase for the new Flash and Green Lantern, and later, the new versions of other former 1940s favorites, naturally The Scarlet Speedster and The Emerald Gladiator were among the lists in those first stories, even though, as mentioned, GL was still something of a novice, having barely touched ring to battery for the first time. Flash, on the other hand, in the absence of any better-known characters (Superman and Batman being such frequent absentees), took it upon himself to chair most of the early meetings of the group. (Wonder Woman was, of course, a more widely-known character, but the world of 1959 wasn't quite ready for a super-team led by a woman. Indeed, despite Women's Liberation, The Black Widow's brief stint as team-captain of Marvel's Champions, and Storm's current deputy-leader status in **X-MEN**, it's certain the world is ready for that even now... unless, of course, we are speaking of an all-female team.)

To round out that initial roster, two supercharacters from back-up strips were chosen. This was hardly a defiance of tradition, either, since a lot of the JSA heroes had never risen to attain their own titles, but merely supported strips in books cover-featuring another character. Aquaman was even a Golden Age character, one of the first of the Earth-One heroes, who had appeared in ***MORE FUN, ADVENTURE,*** and **WORLD'S FINEST** for years. J'Onn J'Onzz, The Martian Manhunter, or to give him the original name of his strip, John Jones, Manhunter from Mars, had been added to the rear of ***DETECTIVE COMICS***, behind the ever-present Batman, in the mid-1950s. The Sea King would later be given a ***SHOWCASE*** outing and then his own book, while J'Onzz would be pushed out of ***DETECTIVE*** by an editorial changeover and find himself in the unlikely pages of ***HOUSE OF MYSTERY*** (then a science-fiction comic, at the last sharing its precious space with Robby Reed, the original ***"Dial-H-***

A WAVE OF TENSION SURGES ACROSS THE SECRET SANCTUARY OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA..
WE'RE ALL PRESENT AND ACCOUNTED FOR--EXCEPT THE VERY MEMBERS WHO SENT OUT EMERGENCY SIGNALS TO MEET THEM HERE !
WHAT'S KEEPING THEM ?
©1981 DC Comics

The Justice League's Secret Sanctuary, furnished in "early bare-walls."

for-Here" kid).

To give a reader who has never seen an early issue of ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** a taste of the heroes' typical meeting-room dialogue, it would be advisable to catch an episode or two of the modern cartoon series, ***SUPER FRIENDS.*** While Green Lantern was occasionally given to exclaiming "Great Guardians!" and Wonder Woman might cut loose with an unexplicated "Merciful Minerva!", the heroes' speech patterns were pretty much cut from the same collegiate-English cloth. To spice up their shop talk, and to give them someone to explain things to as a device to enlighten the reader (while Batman might be allowed to spell things out to the younger, less experienced Robin in his own strip, he would get under a few skins if he endeavored to thus lecture his adult equals in The JLA), the first **B&B** tryout tale introduced teenaged honorary member, "Snapper" (because of his habit of snapping his fingers continuously) Carr. Snapper spoke like what the DC staff (mostly men in their 40s at this time, it should be remembered) must have imagined the typical teen-ager to be: a caricature of a Greenwich Village bohemian musician, **i.e.** a character from another DC book—Dobie Gillis' pal, Maynard. Snapper was fun while he lasted, but by the time Elvis gave way to the Beatles, even he had to "like, change the pace to stay in place, dig?"

II. ORGANIZATION

As one might expect from The Marvel Family and Justice Society chapters in this series, The Justice League met around a large table, looking for all the world like the board of directors of a major corporation caught in their masquerade outfits. Like The Challengers of the Unknown, The JLA preferred seclusion for their retreat to being in the midst of a big city, so their first base was a mountain cave. The headquarters site made sense for a number of reasons. First, it must have appealed to Superman and Batman when they began attending regularly, since the former maintains a similar retreat in his arctic Fortress of Solitude and the latter has always operated out of the many-chambered Batcave below his home. Second, had they set up shop in the city, the question would have arisen as to which city would be chosen, and in the usual DC fashion, each hero maintained law and order in a different urban centre: Superman in Metropolis on the east coast; Batman in nearby Gotham; Flash in midwestern Central City; GL in Coast City, California; the Martian Manhunter in a community called Middletown; Wonder Woman usually in Washington, D.C.; and Aquaman on the high seas, before settling in Atlantis.

AND SO, THE SECOND TRIO OF SUPER-HEROES IS SOON HURTLING SOUTH-WARD BEYOND THE RAIN FORESTS OF BRAZIL, OVER THE TUNDRA COUNTRY OF NORTHERN CHILE AND PERU...
MERCIFUL MINERVA!--LOOK !! WHAT IS THAT GIGANTIC OBJECT ?
I DON'T KNOW!--BUT IT HAS A SINISTER FEELING! IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT LETTER WE RECEIVED !
©1981 DC Comics

Different JLA members had their own distinctive styles of transportation: Batman and Wonder Woman and planes.

Choosing any one of these for a meeting place would be deemed unfair to those members who had to travel long distance cross-country to attend the gatherings (to say nothing of making them tardy when an emergency threatened).

The group therefore settled on a neutral spot, the only population center near their mountain base being the small town of Happy Harbour, where Snapper Carr lived with his parents (and thus, he was able to drive to meetings in his Archie-style jalopy). Finally, the HQ was easily accessible both to the incoming members and to those racing out to deal with a menace: Batman and Wonder Woman had their Bat- and Robot Planes, respectively, for transportation; Flash could reach anywhere in seconds with his super-speed; a nearby river (Happy Harbour was a fishing community) furnished egress for Aquaman; and all the other charter members had the power of flight.

The original headquarters boasted the usual trophy rooms, library (Snapper, who, like GL's pal Pieface, loved to keep scrapbooks of his heroes' adventures, split the group's secretarial chores with Wonder Woman), and of course, the meeting room, but compared to The FF's live-in command center in the Baxter Building or the similar bases of other "common-origin" teams, it was furnished in Early Bare-Walls. Being a "formulated" superteam, **i.e.** a team gathered together in common cause from several other features and comics, one of the first such team of the 1960s, The JLA had no role models, and so tended to keep things very simple. It was only after security problems forced them to abandon the cave base for a synchronous-orbit satellite that The League began to make their headquarters a fully-equipped home-away-from-home for members, and to initiate a system by which one member was always on monitor duty aboard the craft.

In many respects, whatever the changes in their ***modus operandi***, The Justice League, like The Justice Society, resembled an adult kid

gang, a sort of more-individualistic group of grown-up boy (and girl) scouts. Thus, as in all such clubs and fraternities, the election of a new member to the ranks was cause for pomp and celebration. An original tradition, observed more sporadically in later issues, had the splash page of a new-member-inaugural-issue rendered in the form of a ceremonial scroll presented to the super-recruit, commemorating not only his joining the team, but also his (invariable) special aid rendered on his first adventure as a member. The scroll usually read as follows: "The Justice League of America hereby elects _____ [fill in name of super-hero] to membership for life—with all privileges and gratuities including the wearing of the signal device and possession of the golden key which permits entry into the Secret Sanctuary (as the cave HQ was affectionately known), its library and souvenir rooms. It is hereby further resolved and acted upon, that _____ [the new member] shall receive a special commendation for his expert assistance in the case we have entitled on our scrolls... '_____' [fill in story title for that issue]." More recently, the wording has been changed slightly, from "golden key" to "special key" and from "Secret Sanctuary" to "Satellite Sanctuary."

The first new member to join was one who, some said, should have been one of the original founders: Green Arrow. Like Aquaman, GA had been a latecomer in the Golden Age, headlining ***MORE FUN*** for a time, and serving as a back-up in ***ADVENTURE*** and ***WORLD'S FINEST***. For some reason, he was chosen to join the group after its formation (his sidekick Speedy would later be accorded the same treatment in the junior version of The JLA, The Teen Titans), and this decision was to continue a series of strange coincidences in comics, and to determine unique future treatment for The Emerald Archer. For reasons it would take a numerologist to explain, the first new member always seems to join a formulated super-team in their fourth issue: Johnny Thunder was initiated into The JSA in ***ALL STAR #6*** (their fourth outing, since the group feature started in #3); later, Captain America would thaw out and become an Avenger in ***AVENGERS #4***; and the Valkyrie would join forces with The Defenders in their fourth issue (not counting the tryouts in ***MARVEL FEATURE***). Green Arrow was the first to continue the unwitting string of coincidence first unravelled by Johnny Thunder, as he became a JLA member in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #4*** (and in a further coincidence, he and Johnny would eventualy have a lady co-star in common in their solo strips, namely Black Canary). In the world of Earth-One, GA's absence from the opening lineup of the team was explained neatly by Englehart (in the "pre-origin" #144) inasmuch as he was overseas on a vital case at the time the other heroes encountered each other. Green Arrow was also differentiated from the other JLAers in that his Earth-Two double (it had been **he** who starred in ***MORE FUN***, unlike Aquaman who was apparently the same character all along, despite conflicting origins) was a member of

NOBODY ON EARTH REMEMBERS THE SEVEN SOLDIERS -- BECAUSE A TIME-WARP, CREATED BY THE NEBULA-MAN'S DESTRUCTION HURLED THEM BACK THROUGH THE AGES!
GREEN ARROW AND SPEEDY, THE SHINING KNIGHT, THE CRIMSON AVENGER, THE STAR-SPANGLED KID AND STRIPESY, AND THE VIGILANTE NO LONGER EXIST IN YOUR WORLD...
©1981 DC Comics

The story which re-introduced The Seven Soldiers of Victory, from *JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #101.*

The Seven Soldiers of Victory, rather than The Justice Society. Nevertheless, once voted in, GA was treated equally with any other member, although when the group split up to deal with a multiple menace, he was careful never (only once, actually) to form a duo with the similarly-named Green Lantern, to avoid reader confusion. Little did the two characters realize that years later they would share a single award-winning series.

Having pretty well exhausted the existant costumed personnel in the DC line of the early 1960s with the inclusion of GA, editor Schwartz was free to resume his plan to remake The JLA in the image of The JSA. The new Atom was the next to join (#14), followed by the new Hawkman (#31), and the fans were ecstatic. However, besides its reduced size, ***JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA*** differed from ***ALL STAR COMICS*** in another respect, which posed a problem for the series creators. The JSA brought in new hero members to fill gaps left by departing stalwarts, some of them vanished into publishing limbo, others graduated into their own titles and thus too busy to attend group meetings. But while new heroes continued to join The Justice League, no one quit—it was too early in the Silver Age for any features to be faced with cancellation, most of them barely having begun; and, far from leaving the team when they received their own book, JLA members got their own books first (for the most part) and **then** were deemed worthy of membership in the august organization. Therefore, the Justice League meetings began to get a tad crowded, and few were the villains who cared to face up to **ten** super-heroes (not counting Snapper) at the same time. The Avengers would later solve this problem before it had a chance to surface, by throwing out all the original cast in favor of a group of less-powerful characters. The Justice League's eventual solution was to rotate the membership, featuring only a few of the group in each story. The rotation system was hardly done "by the numbers," though: Superman, Batman, Flash, and Green Lantern were almost invariably present; Wonder Woman, Atom, and Hawkman turned up most of the time; and Green Arrow, Aquaman, Martian Manhunter, and Snapper became almost forgotten faces. This battle of the "have" versus "have-not" super-characters was to continue throughout the Fox/Sekowsky run of the book.

The induction of a new member into The JLA was always a cause for celebration—especially since the new member always turned out to be the only hero who could solve whatever case on which the team was then-currently working. In *JLA #4*, a diamond-tipped arrow saved the day.

Getting back to Earth-Prime (*i.e.* our own world) for a moment, with Sakowsky and Dillin virtually the only artists to touch the series until the latter's death in 1980, ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** became a book largely defined by its writers. Thus far we have been dealing with the Gardner Fox era of the strip. In the late 1960s, iconoclast Denny O'Neil would take over as chronicler and (while later candidly admitting he hadn't the slightest notion what to do with the series at the time) would completely change the tone of the book, while simultaneously solving several of the problems with the group roster that had cropped up during its run. O'Neil rewrote a large segment of the Martian Manhunter's personal history, in order to devise a memorable issue in which he departed the ranks. He limited Aquaman's appearances to those stories in which the seagoing super-hero could really fill a useful role. And with the help of Neal Adams in costume design and personal-appearance restructuring (in a Bob-Haney-written ***B&B*** story of the same period), he remade Green Arrow into an entirely new character complete with social conscience and romantic interest (Black Canary, the next new member to join after Hawkman).

Black Canary was the only new member to make the team during O'Neil's tenure or the subsequent scripting reign of Mike Friedrich, an equally experimental period. For a change of pace, more members were quitting the League than signing up; Wonder Woman departed as well, after a temporary loss of powers. During this period, the changes in ***JUSTICE LEAGUE*** reflected those in the entire DC line: Flash was doing stories with human interest and supernatural themes; Green Lantern was experiencing growth pains under the O'Neil/Adams team, thanks to new co-stars GA and Canary; Batman was returning to his "Creature of the Night" image of the 1940s; and even Superman was re-examining his motives as a do-gooder. In short, its members were "finding themselves," to use the phrase of the moment, and the writers, having defined a small and workable cast, were playing the heroes' now-more-obvious personalities off against each other. As much a catalyst of this process as the change of creative staff was the induction of the aforementioned Canary, who hailed from the JSA's Earth-Two, rather than from as established series like the other members.

A bit of explanation is perhaps in order at this point. In their 21st and 22nd issues, The Justice League had duplicated the feat of the Flash and encountered their other-Earthly selves, The Justice Society, in a two-part adventure. A sequel was published exactly a year later, which started yet another comics "tradition," the annual JLA/JSA team-up story, appearing in the Summer issues of the title each year. It was after one of these get-togethers that the JLA's new female member decided to make the switch of Earths and of super-groups (after the death of her husband at the hands of the team's latest adversary). After several years of these regular collaborations between the two teams, their dual exploits needed a spark to ignite the readers' further interest, and thus began the practice of having the two Justice teams meet yet a *third* team of evil-fighters each year. Len Wein, the next writer to take the JLA helm, inaugurated this practice in the 100th issue. Under Wein and later writers, The League and The Society met The Seven Soldiers of Victory, The Freedom Fighters, The Shazam Squadron of Justice, a coalition of DC characters from various historical periods, The Legion of Super-Heroes, and even Jack Kirby's New Gods. Most of these other teams are discussed in articles earlier or later in this series, with one exception: The Seven Soldiers.

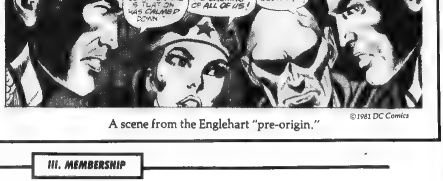
The Seven Soldiers of Victory were a 1940s team born in the immediate aftermath of the JSA's success in ***ALL STAR***. (Space limitations unfortunately prevented our overview of the group from being included in the same issue with that of The JSA.) You will remember that The All-American arm of the DC parent company, responsible for the majority of the JSA characters, had become a competitor of sorts to the Superman/Batman portion of the line during the Golden Age. To compete with the tremendous popularity of The Action Ace and The Darknight Detective, the All-American staff created the Justice Society group concept in ***ALL STAR***, drawing on their many separate super-characters appearing in various

titles to form the team. Thereupon, to compete with ***ALL STAR***, the DC "mainline" composed a team of characters from ***their*** various books, which they dubbed alternately The Seven Soldiers of Victory, or The Law's Legionnaires, and gave them their own title, called ***LEADING COMICS***. The unique aspect of the new team was that none of its members possessed actual super-powers. The Vigilante, a western-garbed crusader who rode a motorcycle instead of a bronco, hailed from ***ACTION COMICS***. The Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy, a sort of Batman and Robin team in reverse, where the junior partner was the brains of the duo, were the namesake characters of ***STAR-SPANGLED COMICS*** (though not the cover feature, after Simon and Kirby's Newsboy Legion debuted). The Crimson Avenger had even predated Batman as a feature in ***DETECTIVE COMICS***, long before he adopted his costume and enlisted his Oriental servant, Wing, as a uniformed sidekick. (Wing served as the unofficial eighth Soldier, and was shown to have perished in the team's revival story in ***JLA #100-102***.) The Shining Knight, a time-traveler of sorts from King Arthur's day, possessed a winged horse and magical sword and armor, but no superhuman prowess; he appeared regularly in ***ADVENTURE COMICS***. And the "other" Green Arrow and his partner, Speedy, as mentioned earlier, were habitues of ***MORE FUN COMICS***.

The first story, in ***LEADING #1***, told how members met and formed their alliance, and future tales progressed as might be expected from that beginning. However, whether because no such formal structure of meetings, charters, and chairmen as The JSA had was developed for them, or because none of the members was a character of terrific popularity, the team never got the chance to carve the impressive niche in comics history of their ***ALL STAR*** counterparts. ***LEADING #15*** saw the title converted to a funny-animal comic, a fate that befell many an action title in the late 1940s and The Seven Soldiers were unheard from until they met The Justice League two decades later. (Indeed, had not a JLA Annual run a pin-up of the group, together with one of The Justice Society, it is doubtful whether most present fans would have been aware of their one-time existence.)

Besides bringing additional players into the annual JLA/JSA reunion stories, Wein also successfully married the elements of the Fox and O'Neil/Friedrich issues of the book during his time as writer. The character interplay continued (even a brief Green Arrow-Hawkman feud developed), but as if to make up for lost time, a coterie of new members petitioned to swell the roster. In a rapid flurry of ballots, The Phantom Stranger was signed up (although Wein insists he never formally joined), The Elongated Man was inducted, and The Red Tornado followed Black Canary as a refugee from Earth-Two and The JSA. Under Wein and subsequent scripters, notably Gerry Conway and Steve Englehart, Hawkman departed and returned, Wonder Woman regained her powers and rejoined, The Tornado was "killed" and reconstructed several times (this RT, unlike the original character of the name, was an artificial android hero), Hawkgirl's long-overdue initiation was accomplished, Zatanna added further feminine presence to the ranks in addition to being the group's first sorcerous member, and most recently, Conway's own creation Firestorm made the honor roll.

Today, The Justice League is again overcrowded, with almost any past or present member likely to turn up at a meeting, although Green Arrow recently resigned, and J'Onn J'Onzz and The Phantom Stranger only participate on rare occasions. The policy of rotating appearances is again in force, this time handled more or less fairly for all concerned (Superman perhaps excepted). The satellite base of operations, with its teleportation tube access points (courtesy of Hawkman and ***STAR TREK***), provides a more secure focal point for the group's activities than ever before. And, changes in the lives of the individual members notwithstanding, The JLA retains its place as DC's oldest and most venerable continuing group feature... itself now a tradition of greater longevity than the original run of ***ALL STAR COMICS*** in whose image it was birthed.


NOW YES- BUT WHAT ABOUT IN SIX MONTHS OR SO, IF SOMETHING LIKE THIS AGAIN CALLED DOWN
AND WHEN HE DOES ANNOUNCE HIMSELF, IT COULD BE WITH THE BACKING OF ALL OF US!
YOU KNOW ME - NOW I'M JOINING A CLUB I'D RATHER NOT BE A MEMBER OF!
©1981 DC Comics

A scene from the Englehart "pre-origin."

III. MEMBERSHIP

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Founded: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #144*** (origin)/***JUSTICE LEAGUE #9*** (first adventure)/***BRAVE AND BOLD #28*** (earliest appearance)

1. ***J'ONN J'ONZZ A.K.A. THE MARTIAN MANHUNTER*** (John Jones, later uses the alias Marco Xavier)
   Charter member; quits as regular member in ***JLA #71***.

2. ***AQUAMAN*** (Arthur Curry)
   Charter member.

3. ***WONDER WOMAN*** (Diana Prince, Princess Diana of Paradise Island)
   Charter member; takes leave of absence from ***JLA #69-128***.

4. ***GREEN LANTERN*** (Hal Jordan)
   Charter member (present in ***JLA #144*** as Hal Jordan only)

5. ***THE FLASH*** (Barry Allen)
   Charter member

6. ***SUPERMAN*** (Clark Kent, Kal-El of Krypton)
   Charter member; see also ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** (as Superboy)

7. ***THE BATMAN*** (Bruce Wayne)
   Charter member

8. ***"SNAPPER" CARR*** (Lucas Carr)
   Joins: ***BRAVE AND BOLD #28***; quits as regular member in ***JLA #77***

9. ***GREEN ARROW*** (Oliver Queen)
   Joins: ***JLA #4***; quits as regular member in ***JLA #181***

10. ***THE ATOM*** (Ray Palmer)
    Joins: ***JLA #14***

11. ***HAWKMAN*** (Carter Hall, Katar Hol of Thanagar)
    Joins: ***JLA #31***; takes leave of absence from ***JLA #109-116***

12. ***THE BLACK CANARY*** (Dinah Drake Lance)
    Joins: ***JLA #75***; see also ***JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA***

13. ***THE PHANTOM STRANGER*** (?)
    Status uncertain; joins (?): ***JLA #103***

14. ***THE ELONGATED MAN*** (Ralph Dibny)
    Joins: ***JLA #105***

15. ***THE RED TORNADO*** (John Smith)
    Joins: ***JLA #106***; see also ***JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA***; missing in action from ***JLA #129-145***

I--I DON'T KNOW! I WAS BLINDFOLDED WHEN I WAS TAKEN THERE AND WHEN I WENT AWAY! I NEVER GOT A GOOD LOOK AT HIM!
THEN BY THE TIME WE FIND HIS HIDE-OUT, MISTER MEMORY WILL HAVE MADE GOOD HIS ESCAPE!
NOT NECESSARILY! FLASH--COME WITH ME!
©1981 DC Comics

16. ***HAWKGIRL*** (Shiera Hall, Shayera Hol of Thanagar)
Joins: ***JLA #146***

17. ***ZATANNA***
Joins: ***JLA #161***

18. ***FIRESTORM A.K.A. THE NUCLEAR MAN*** (Ronald Raymond/Prof. Martin Stein)
Joins: ***JLA #179***

NON-MEMBER ALLIES:
ADAM STRANGE; SUPERGIRL (Linda Danvers); ROBIN (Dick Grayson); BATGIRL (Barbara Gordon); BLACK LIGHTNING (Jefferson Pierce—offered membership but declined); THE VIGILANTE (of Earth-One—Greg Sanders).

HONORARY (Stand-by) MEMBERS (not included in official roster):

1. ***METAMORPHO THE ELEMENT MAN*** (Rex Mason)
Given special status: ***JLA #42***

2. ***SARGON THE SORCEROR*** (John Sargent)
Given special status: ***JLA #99***

THE SEVEN SOLDIERS OF VICTORY (aka THE LAW'S LEGIONNAIRES)
Founded: ***LEADING COMICS #1***
Disbanded: ***JUSTICE LEAGUE #102***

1. ***THE VIGILANTE*** (of Earth-Two; Greg Sanders)

2. ***THE STAR-SPANGLED KID*** (Sylvester Pemberton)
see also ***JUSTICE SOCIETY OF AMERICA***

3. ***STRIPESY*** (Pat Dugan)

4. ***THE SHINING KNIGHT*** (Sir Justin)

5. ***THE GREEN ARROW*** (of Earth-Two; Oliver Queen)

6. ***SPEEDY*** (of Earth-Two; Roy Harper)

7. ***THE CRIMSON AVENGER*** (Lee Travis)

HONORARY MEMBERS:
1. ***WING***
Dies: ***JLA #102***

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COMICS FEATURE #14's
SUMMER SPECIAL ISSUE

COMICS FEATURE interviews
FRANK MILLER

PETER SANDERSON analyzes-in-depth
Englehart and Rogers'
DETECTIVE COMICS

A Talk with ***STEVE ENGLEHART*** about his forthcoming book, *THE POINT MAN*

MURRAY WARD catalogues
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Donna Ugol will explain the basis of the appeal of
BRENDA STARR

Plus, ***END NOTES, QUALIFIED PRAISE, FANDOM ORIGINS, THE LOST COMICS COMPANIES,*** and ***MORE!!!***

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An Overview of:

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

"WE HAVE MET THE BARBARIANS AND THEY ARE US!"

by Brian Meyer

Everyone probably collects something, and some of us collect almost anything. I am one of the latter. As I've grown older, I've whittled down the breadth of what I collect due to space, money, and energy, while I have simultaneously increased its depth. The depth of my collection, however, does not necessarily correspond to my current tastes. My taste these days is, I'd like to think, more refined than it used to be; this does not stop me from collecting material of varying quality, but it does help me separate the mediocre material I collect from the excellent.

One of my collections is devoted exclusively to classic humor strips, by which I mean those that are classic to me, those that make me laugh no matter how often I read them. I have a book of them that I've acquired over the years. No strip has dominated the book in the seven years I've had it so much as Dik Browne's ***HAGAR THE HORRIBLE***. This article attempts to explain why.

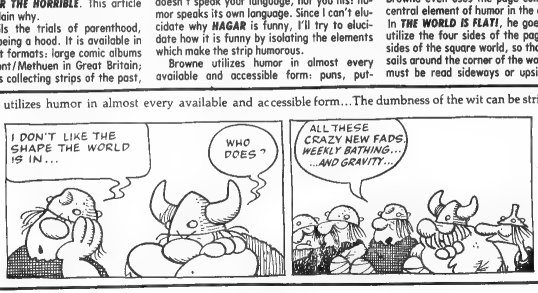
HAGAR details the trials of parenthood, livelihood, and being a hood. It is available in several different formats: large comic albums printed by Egmont/Methuen in Great Britain; paperback books collecting strips of the past, some of which are foreign and some domestic; and finally, the daily newspaper. An examination of the albums reveals that the earlier ones are little more than collections of strips loosely bound together by a watery-thin plotline, while the later ones display an increasing sophistication of humor built around plots that serve to generate their own humor. The growth of Browne's storytelling ability in the albums is paralleled by a concomitant deepening of the themes with which he deals. This is equally true of the daily and Sunday strips, in which Hagar's adventures are not only physical, but also moral and psychological.

The important thing, in terms of classification and readership, is that these are humorous adventures. They make the reader laugh, although it is difficuly to explain exactly why. Trying to explain why something is funny is like trying to converse with someone who doesn't speak your language, nor you his: humor speaks its own language. Since I can't elucidate why ***HAGAR*** is funny, I'll try to elucidate how it is funny by isolating the elements which make the strip humorous.

Browne utilizes humor in almost every available and accessible form: puns, putdowns, slapstick, irony, reversal of cliches, taking statements at their face value, sight gags, ***anything***. He can build a series of jokes around a single idea; for example, in an album in which Hagar attempts to prove the flatness of the world, Browne includes jokes about flat feet, flat singing, levelheadedness, and so forth. The dumbness of the wit can be striking: when one character says something works in theory, another asks, "Where's theory?"

Not all the humor is quite so literal; comics being visual, it is of the essence that much of the humor be visual. It is. In one panel, a wizard requests lights on a subject; in the next, he places a candle on the person who came to see him seeking help. This visual pun may provoke a groan, but it still works. Many a joke too dumb to laugh at is given punch by a droll look on Hagar's face or some background element putting a twist on the joke's meaning. Browne even uses the page composition as a central element of humor in the comic albums. In ***THE WORLD IS FLAT!***, he goes so far as to utilize the four sides of the page as the four sides of the square world, so that when Hagar sails around the corner of the world, the pages must be read sideways or upside down, de-

"Browne utilizes humor in almost every available and accessible form...The dumbness of the wit can be striking."


I DON'T LIKE THE SHAPE THE WORLD IS IN...
WHO DOES?
ALL THESE CRAZY NEW FADS WEEKLY BATHING...
...AND GRAVITY...
© 1981 King Features Syndicate

A VIKING DOESN'T NEED MUCH TO BE HAPPY...
A GOOD FAMILY... A LITTLE WINE... A FEW FRIENDS... A STOUT BOAT...
A LITTLE LAND TO CALL MY OWN.....
...LIKE EUROPE.
© King Features Syndicate, Inc., 1975.

pending on which side of the world Hagar is on at the moment.

The visual style of the strip goes far beyond tilting pages and visual humor. Browne's artistry is bold in its directness, its simple strokes creating clarity and mood in a limited, limiting space. The development of this style in the eight years since Hagar's debut is remarkable. From his beginning in suggestive lines and geometric shapes, Browne has progressed to a repertoire of lines of differing thickness, cross-hatchings, shadowing, detailing, and in general demonstrating versatility in and mastering of cartooning. He creates character by caricature, exaggerating a bulbous nose or flickering eyelash to suggest sloth or vanity. His panels are especially strong in their composition and the way they capture a particular mood or moods.

Perhaps the thing that Browne's visuals capture best is the cultural setting of Hagar's world. The best comic strips we have are notable in that they are all firmly anchored in a singular cultural place/time (often ones of their own making), like **POGO, PEANUTS, DOONESBURY,** and **ASTERIX.** Hagar's world shares this anchor. Every story or strip emphasizes his locale and its philosophy; for example, Hagar tells us that "The fact that the world is flat is the whole foundation of Viking life." Both the joke and the setting are clear, saying much about Viking life and its demise. As a traveling adventurer, Hagar—much like his French counterpart Asterix—introduces us to his world and its cultural stereotypes—the English talk beautifully and carry umbrellas, the Dutch grow tulips and wear wooden shoes—and makes us laugh at them. Thus the base of the strip is its setting, in both a visual and a cultural sense.

HAGAR is set in the Dark Ages. One strip even explained why they are called "The Dark Ages"; in it, Hagar's son Hamlet decides to write a definitive history of the times. Hagar, disgusted with his son's unViking-like behavior, says, "Not with my candle, you don't," whereupon he blows out the candle, leaving Hamlet to peer out of the black and comment, "I think I'll call it the Dark Ages." It is just this sort of pointed humor which permeates the strip. When they want to settle a disagreement "in a civilized manner," they arm-wrestle. Hindsight in this case may not be correct, but it sure is funny. These Vikings even jab at themselves; Hagar gets so mad at one aide for not throwing his garbage in a waste-basket that he accuses the aide of being a barbarian.

The strip also makes light of superstitions, fables, myths, and other forms of the fantastic. Hagar may consult the gods to find that they are smiling on him, only to learn they are really snickering at him, or he may buy dozens of geese in hopes of finding one that will lay a golden egg. He cautions Hamlet against reading too many books because "They won't help with the real world and day-to-day perils—like witches, trolls, pixies, and demons." By presenting us with castles, giants, ogres, and the like, Browne comments not only upon our past fantasies but also our present wishes—and it is unclear which is sillier.

IT'S NOT FAIR! A SENSITIVE KID LIKE ME BORN IN THE DARK AGES!
WHY WASN'T I BORN A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW?
1981 King Features Syndicate

"*HAGAR* straddles the ground between stereotypes and us."

The present, in fact, is ever-present in ***HAGAR***. Despite the Dark Ages setting, Browne is not above poking fun at modern society; indeed, he delights in it. Hagar's travels provide Browne with multiple opportunities to satirize provincialism, tourism, and local customs, right down to miniskirts. Should Hagar prove lax with his tax, the IRS man lurks behind every bush. Browne makes fun of modern mores in a clever role reversal: Hagar's daughter Honi is criticized because she wears battle armor and carries a mace while his son Hamlet is criticized because he wears short hair and carries a book! When Hamlet invents a device which tells a person when to get up, eat, and go to work (a clock), Hagar smashes it refusing to be ruled by any such tyrant. How many of us have had the same wish?

AFTER ALL, WE KNOW YOU'RE A GOOD BOY, BUT OTHER PEOPLE WILL THINK YOU'RE JUST A SHORT-HAIRED FREAK!
4-5
DIK
1981 King Features Syndicate

Hagar and Hamlet: "More than just the trappings of modern society."

More than just the trappings of modern society are present here: we are. Hagar's wife Helga complains that Hagar brings all his work home with him even as he appears at the door beset by five ferocious fighters. Hagar fears baths, his wife's cooking ("If you are what you eat," he says, "it's no wonder they call me horrible"), and unemployment (translate: times of peace). Best of all is Hamlet, who hates being born in an era of war, murder, and crime, and asks, "Why wasn't I born a thousand years from now?" Behind him, the morning sun rises to dispel some dark clouds, providing a hopeful counterpoint to his plaint. This is multi-layered storytelling, the kind in which Browne excels.

"...alongside the strip's...modernity is its universality."

© 1981 King Features Syndicate

Beyond and alongside the strip's relation to modernity is its universality. This is where ***HAGAR*** is at its best, attacking the problems that attack all of us. Amid the satires on ***BEOWULF*** and Western movies are the tribulations of a man trying to raise his children, move to a new house, cope with social pressures, and bring home the bacon—along with the rest of the farm and anything else he can lay his hands on. Hagar must deal with fair-weather friends who roll out the red carpet when he returns home and roll it up again when they realize he's returned empty-handed. Worst of all is a marriage which is more of a battle than Hagar's work and a wife who asks him every time he leaves to loot the world if he'll be home for dinner.

These touches of universal problems loom both little and large. Little touch: Helga tells Hagar not to bleed on the floor—just as my mother once did to my brother when he cut himself. Large touch: Browne takes swipes at the way we type people, giving us Lucky Eddie, Dirty Dirk, and other one-note jokes that resonate with the force of a symphony in our ordered, stereotype-full world. Little touch: Hagar, seeking a husband for Honi, chooses a miniature version of himself, not unlike some fathers I know. Large touch: Chauvinistic insensibilities get skewered in such strips as one in which Hagar says, "There are only two things you can be sure of—and no. 1 is Men Are Smarter Than Women"; asked what no. 2 is, Hagar responds, "The World Is Flat."

Browne's characters are more like us than perhaps we would like to admit. All the visuals, all the articulation of setting, all the nice touches would mean nothing if they didn't have lively, well-realized characters to react to them. Fortunately, Browne does not falter in this, his central task: his people have prides and prejudices just as real as those of us who read about them. The humor in the strip arises naturally, from characters acting in and reacting to a particular situation, not in a forced manner where a situation can be placed upon any stock characters with the same results.

Thus Browne can alternate between depicting Helga as a shrewish nag and a noble matron who keeps her family together while the father is away on business. The battle tide of the marriage between Hagar and Helga is ever-swaying: Hagar complains that women have no sense of humor, and Helga retorts, "Then why do we marry men?" Honi's vanity is matched by her beauty, her aggressiveness with men by her lack of success. Hamlet may not know how to fight with a sword, but he saves his family by cutting out the ladders from underneath the invaders who besiege their castle. Poor Lucky Eddie is used as an anchor, a mast, a bridge, and yet he remains unfailingly cheerful and optimistic.

What of Hagar himself? He is lazy, rude, unclean, drunken, moody, and childish. He is also courageous, good-natured, generous, pragmatic, and down-to-earth. Gripe about his job he does, but he relishes it, too. Hagar is a master of the quick retort, and even better at setting himself up. He is a klutz and a schemer, a churl and a dreamer. Yes, and what dreams he has: in what is probably my favorite Sunday ***HAGAR***, he tells Hamlet of his most cherished dream: "I'm all alone and I have to defend Norway single-handed against a vast enemy... A hundred thousand archers and lancers, horses and elephants with weapons of war... Led by Attila the Hun, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, who raises his hand for quiet and says..."'We'll attack as soon as our reinforcements arrive!'" To all this, Hamlet says, "Oh, wow." Oh, wow, indeed.

Some of Hagar's finest moments came when he fulfilled one of his dreams: he became king of England in the album ***HAGAR IN ENGLAND***. He commanded that there be days of no school, free beer, no taxes, and National Mother-in-Law Day every other Friday—on which you can do whatever you want to your mother-in-law. Soon Helga starts messing everything up, prompting Hagar to note that "A man's castle isn't his home anymore." When his evil advisors reverse his decrees and oppress the people, the citizens of England cry out, "Short live the king!" In the end, Hagar learns that the crown of the king is a crown of thorns, and he abdicates the throne to do what he loves best—return to loot England next year!

In this way, ***HAGAR*** is instructive. Like the best humor, it teaches us to laugh at our foibles (and our fables), rather than at those of others. By grinning, chuckling, or guffawing at Hagar and his contemporaries, we really grin, chuckle and guffaw at ourselves. As a strip, ***HAGAR*** straddles the grounds between situation and character, past ages and present, stereotypes and us. It suggests that we are all civilized barbarians and barbarous civilians. In this, there is a message for all of us; Browne's gift is to make us laugh even as we ponder it.●

Hagar and Helga: "The battle tide of [their] marriage is ever-swaying."

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The Ripoff Press building is not the block-long concern you see on the back of the *FREAK BROTHERS* books. From the street all you can see is a doorway with Fat Freddy's Cat saying, "Sorry, Kids, Adults only." The foyer displays all the ROP line; beyond it lies the storage, editing, and publishing areas. On the second floor, as befits a sober publishing house, ROP keeps its pool and ping-pong tables. Both were going full-strength when Brad Walker interviewed one of the newest underground stars... ***Larry Gonick***.

All illustrations for this article ©1981 Larry Gonick

MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE

WALKER: One of the hottest underground projects has been your ***CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE***.

GONICK: Am I supposed to answer that? Thanks.

WALKER: Actually I was going to ask what was the series' genesis, the idea that got you started?

GONICK: It's a long story. I've always done comics with information in them. The guy that got me started doing comics in the first place is this Mexican cartoonist named Ruiz. He works under the psuedonym of Ruiz, that is. He used to do a 24-page comic every week in Mexico and they always had, in the middle, an eight-page cartoon essay on some subject. They were on all kinds of things, but he's very political, and that side was emphasized at times. So I started doing things along that line. Not comic books; I did a strip called ***"Boston Comics"*** in a weekly paper in Boston. It was like a little cartoon essay. One thing led to another and I learned more about Boston. Finally, after that strip stopped I had enough history to do a Boston history strip. That was the next thing and it ran in the ***BOSTON GLOBE*** color Sunday Section (half page) for about a year and a half. This was for the Bicentennial. After the Bicentennial I ran out of information and the strip wound down because there wasn't any reason for it anymore. I tried to figure out some kind of history project because the format worked especially well for history. There are certain other things that it works for—probably some subjects, certain kinds of information it ***doesn't*** work too well for. But it does work well for history, I thought, so I tried to find a historical subject that would provide enough information so that I probably wouldn't be out of a job. So I figured the world probably would last for a lifetime. I expect to be working on it for a long time now.

WALKER: You don't know how long it's going to take, haven't pencilled it out that far?

GONICK: It's not outlined in detail, but I estimate (Cries of "He beat me! He beat me!" from the pool table) Be sure to get that when you type it up. (A siren goes by the window)

WALKER: Lots of atmosphere. It's called ***THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE***, but it mostly deals with Earth.

GONICK: Well, the first one has some other parts of the universe in it and we may move into other areas, but actually—I'm not too good at titles, I'll tell you right now—and I thought about something like ***"Universal History"*** or similar. So I came up here to write it, and to talk to Gilbert Shelton, and Fred Todd also, and we hashed around the title for awhile and Shelton said, "Y'know, ***'History of the Universe'*** sounds a lot funnier." So we went back and forth on that and I buckled under to him.

WALKER: You said history works well in the comic format. What other subjects did you have in mind that work well?

GONICK: Well, any kind of social-scientific subject works, I think—where you try to explain interactions berween people.

WALKER: Like economics, possibly?

GONICK: Like economics, or sociology, or psychology. In fact, there's a couple of Freud books out right now that are done in graphics. What may ***not*** work so well—I'm not sure, you know, maybe anything works—there are other kinds of subjects that are graphic, too, that don't have people in them so much but would also work well. I've got something in the works right now but I don't want to say what it is. But all kinds of things have been done. Before I started, there was a group in San Francisco that did a book called "Fixing Brakes": the brake shoes were depicted as being shoes, there was a little character with big feet—so there's all kinds of things that can be done.

WALKER: Exploring the potential, as they like to say. I know you also do a strip about cooking...

GONICK: Right.

WALKER: ...called ***CARTOON KITCHEN?***

GONICK: ***CARTOON KITCHEN.*** See, that's what I mean—I'm bad at titles. It runs in ***THE EXAMINER,*** about fifteen pages right now.

WALKER: Not too bad. All your own recipes?

GONICK: Yeah.

WALKER: I know you use the same character, the narrator of the ***UNIVERSE*** books.

WALKER: In a white shirt instead of a black one.

WALKER: I heard something about the Rip Off Syndicate going out of business due to financial problems.

GONICK: It's not having any financial problems right now because it doesn't exist right now. It goes up and down. The syndicate here has always served primarily as promotion for the books. I don't know that it's ever earned a profit on its own. It's always had difficulty because of the nature of the newspapers that subscribe to it, most of which don't have any money, and half of which seem to go out of business periodically. It's always a problem.

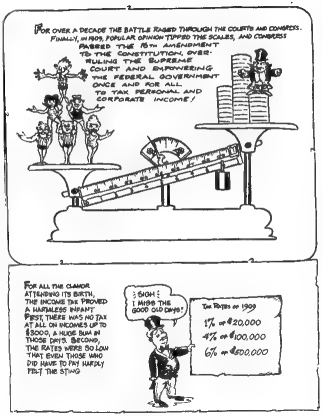
WALKER: I know the feeling. You were talking about some Freud books that came out. Are you thinking, perhaps, of ***FREUD FOR BEGINNERS?***

GONICK: That's one of them, and then there's another one in a very large format, which I forget the title of. It's by two French journalists.

Gonick started his historical overview with a big bang in the very first issue of THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE.

WALKER: I think I know the one you mean.
GONICK: It's in sepiatone.
WALKER: The last shot has him dying with a gigantic hard-on.
GONICK: I have the book, and I'll have to go back and look. I must've repressed that.
WALKER: What do you think about the Beginner's Books?
GONICK: What I think about the Beginner's Books is that the original ones, which are by Ruiz, the Mexican cartoonist, are about one thousand times as good as the other ones.
WALKER: By A&Z.
GONICK: Well, there are two by A&Z: those are the next-best ones but they don't have his light touch, the humor isn't there, and they're somewhat more dense graphically. Then there's also the Einstein book which was written by a physicist and drawn by a guy who's obviously an art director or something; it just doesn't work very well for me. I could do a better Einstein book—I know I could. I think there's also a problem, focussing on individuals like that. Ruiz's original book is called ***CUBA FOR BEGINNERS.*** This is not published in the United States as a part of that series. That's owned by another publisher.
WALKER: I've seen it in the United States.
GONICK: Yeah, but it's published by a small Trotskyite press, you see. The other series is published by Pantheon. ***MARX FOR BEGINNERS,*** now—if there's one individual you might want to focus on he's a good one because he's obviously the most influential philosopher of the modern day. But the other ones seem to have been chosen simply because they were people. A whole book about one person creates certain problems, you know.
WALKER: It creates a strong line of unity through the series, though.
GONICK: Well, it's always nice to have a running character, but there are different ways to do that. For example, you can have a narrator as a running character. Just for an example.
WALKER: Just for an example.
GONICK: Just for an example, right.
WALKER: CASCADE COMIX MONTHLY called you the Harvard-educated cartoonist. Can you give us a rundown of your education?
GONICK: I can run down my education. It gets run down a lot, especially around here. I was a math student, which means four years college and five years graduate school. My fourth year in graduate school is when I started really cartooning seriously; it got to be so obsessive that I finally just dropped out during my fifth year.

WALKER: So you're basically a cartoonist first and foremost.
GONICK: Fulltime.
WALKER: But I imagine you read comics a long time before you started cartooning?
GONICK: Yeah. During college I was a Marvel comic collector. Somewhere along the way I saw underground comics and liked them.
WALKER: Who were your favorites, your big influences, as it were?
GONICK: Well, for graphic style it's got to be Walt Kelly, as ought to be obvious. And Al Capp also. Those were always my favorites as a kid. Then there's Ruiz, who's the biggest sort of conceptual influence.
WALKER: The only Ruiz books I've seen are the Beginner Books, so I wouldn't know.
GONICK: Well, you've seen those two.
WALKER: Oh, yeah.
GONICK: There's a lot of other stuff. But I mean the whole idea of doing comics that way—the very first comic book I did, actually, was called ***"Blood From a Stone."***
WALKER: Yes, I read that.
GONICK: It's a book on tax reform and it's just a direct knock-off of the Ruiz format, layout—every page.
WALKER: It's not as tightly packed as some of the ***UNIVERSE*** books.
GONICK: That's right, that's a virtue in my opinion that there's a lot of white space. I'm trying to get away from everything too tightly packaged.
(At this point a missile flies out of the Billiards room and hits Gonick in the stomach. Unharmed, he raises it aloft.)
WALKER: A rubber chicken just flew in.
GONICK: A rubber chicken just flew in. Y'see, anything can happen in a comic strip.
WALKER: I believe it.
GONICK: But then to pursue that line—anybody who does comics now, particularly if they work in the underground, owes a debt to Shelton and others.
WALKER: I seem to see a little of Richards [Ted Richards] in your work.
GONICK: (Laughs) Well, he and I shared a studio for a year and a half and it was hard not to have some of it rub off.
WALKER: I would imagine. When I saw your stuff in ***CORPORATE CRIME***—was it number one?
GONICK: Number two.
WALKER: The one where you talked about corporations—I'd expec-


FOR OVER A DECADE THE BATTLE RAGED THROUGH THE COURTS AND CONGRESS. FINALLY, IN 1909, POPULAR OPINION TIPPED THE SCALES, AND CONGRESS PASSED THE 16TH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, OVER-RULING THE SUPREME COURT AND EMPOWERING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ONCE AND FOR ALL TO TAX PERSONAL AND CORPORATE INCOME!
FOR ALL THE CLAMOR ATTENDING ITS BIRTH, THE INCOME TAX PROVED A HARMLESS INFANT. FIRST, THERE WAS NO TAX AT ALL ON INCOMES UP TO $3000, A HUGE SUM IN THOSE DAYS. SECOND, THE RATES WERE SO LOW THAT EVEN THOSE WHO DID HAVE TO PAY HARDLY FELT THE STING
:) SIGH :(I MISS THE GOOD OLD DAYS!
TAX RATES IN 1909
1% ON $20,000
4% ON $100,000
6% ON $500,000

Gonick's interest in using comic books as an educational medium became evident very early on in his career. This is a page from one of his first publications, *BLOOD FROM A STONE.*

ted to find more on that in **BLOOD FROM A STONE**, more on the corporation character.

GONICK: **BLOOD FROM A STONE** was done a long time before that—actually the Corporation character was invented for **CORPORATE CRIME.**

WALKER: Specifically for that two-pager?

GONICK: Well, that two-pager was a condensation of an eight-pager that I did for a group in Washington that never published it because—it's a long story why they never published it but it has to do with the fact they they were not in a position to publish anything wherein a corporation looked so unsympathetic. But I've used him since.

WALKER: Besides that two-pager?

GONICK: I do some cartooning for a little tax-reform newsletter so I do use him in there.

WALKER: Are you affiliated with the Jarvis group?

GONICK: No.

WALKER: I always thought Proposition 13 was a nice idea that didn't get enforced properly.

GONICK: No, that's a whole other issue—let's not talk about it.

WALKER: Where do you stand on inflation?

GONICK: Where do I stand on inflation? It's fine as long as our wages go up faster than prices.

WALKER: Close to the heart. What kind of materials, paper, pens do you use?

GONICK: I use Strathmore Bristol paper, two-ply, rough surface rather than smooth which everyone else seems to use and the reason I use the rough is because I draw with a brush, just like Kelly, and you have to have some kind of texture on the paper.

WALKER: Do you lay everything out in blue pencil?

GONICK: No, I use a Dixon Ticonderoga #3 school pencil. It's got a good eraser on the end.

WALKER: Just that I'd seen some Kelly originals and they were in blue pencil.

GONICK: Yeah, that's the old-fashioned way. Then you don't erase the blue pencil because the camera doesn't see it; but if you use black pencil, then erase it, you then have this beautiful original with no crap on it. I draw with a brush, almost exclusively a Windsor-Newton Watercolor Brush #2, and I letter with a Speedball.

WALKER: How long does it take you to do a page?

GONICK: What do you mean by "do?" Once it's written? See, I work the opposite of some cartoonists. With me it takes a long time to write a page because of the information. The problem of handling information takes me a long time to get it all laid out and everything put in the exact right place. That, I have no idea—it's very hard to put a time value on that. Once that's done, it's pretty fast. I can draw pretty fast.

WALKER: Okay, say you've got all the information down; how long does it take you to draw the pages then?

GONICK: Well, it could take as little as an hour and a half—or it could take as long as four hours maximum.

WALKER: You work steadily, then, I imagine.

GONICK: I don't know how many cartoonists you've interviewed, but of all the ones I know, Shelton's the only one who doesn't have a hunchback. (Laughs)

WALKER: Well, he was getting there. In my interview he said he spent all his time in London just drawing Wonder Wart-hog; he had the pages all over his apartment walls.

GONICK: See. He's an example of the other way around. It doesn't take him very long to write it down but it takes him—about a day I think he told me—to draw a page.

WALKER: But you do all your writing beforehand?

GONICK: Oh yeah.

WALKER: Do you sketch out the rough confines of a book before you start on it?

GONICK: These days I'm laying out all 48 pages before I start to ink anything.

WALKER: Are you on number six right now?

GONICK: Well, I just finished number five so I'm thinking about number six.

WALKER: **"Brains and Bronze."**

GONICK: That's number five.

WALKER: How long will that take to be printed and out?

GONICK: You're asking the wrong person. (Laughs) Gotta go downstairs and ask. I don't know.

WALKER: In a month, say?

GONICK: If there's enough money in the account then it'll get printed within a month.

WALKER: Your first two books were reprinted recently in the new softback format.

GONICK: Paperback, yeah.

WALKER: Your book had a list of quotes on the back that looked very interesting. Apparently Hub Caen [a San Francisco columnist] reviewed your book?

GONICK: Well, when it came out there was an item in there, in his column, which you can see blown up downstairs in the window. About four lines that say what a nice thing it is to have Rip Off in town.

WALKER: Well, that didn't hurt you, I imagine.

GONICK: Nope. As a matter of fact, one of the weak points of Rip Off's distribution is in the Bay Area—if any distributors are reading this they should contact us—anyway, soon as that Hub Caen column

[The full quotation runs: "Add to life's little plusses; the Rip Off Press on 17th Street, which publishes such splendid comic books as Shelton's ***FAT FREDDY'S CAT*** (raunchiest of felines) and Gonick's ***CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE*** (facts made funky!)"

came out all the comic book stores in the Bay Area called up and ordered several hundred comics so it was definitely worth about $600 in publicity.

WALKER: Great. The blurbs from educators—do you hear anything from them, if they are using your books in the classrooms?

GONICK: Oh, definitely. Sure.

WALKER: What kind of classes are they—high school, college?

GONICK: Most of the ones I know about are in colleges; I also know they use it in some high schools.

WALKER: I imagine you might especially run into some problems with high schools because you've got a little explicit sex and violence in a few of them. Not like Spain, certainly, but...

GONICK: That's true, but I think that's a struggle worth waging; in other words, I think there's an argument to be made that it has to be in there in order for the account to be accurate and that if it's not in there you've got some kind of laundered version. If you want to talk about all the things you can run into problems with, you can run into problems writing a book about evolution at all, if you want to have it in a high school, because now—in California—they're trying to pass a law that says you have to teach Creationism, give Creationism equal time in biology.

WALKER: Instead of evolution.

GONICK: Right. And how can you have evolution without sex?

WALKER: Takes all the fun out of it.

GONICK: Goes a lot slower, too.

WALKER: Okay, let's get back to ***BLOOD FROM A STONE*** for a minute. You're working with a tax reform group?

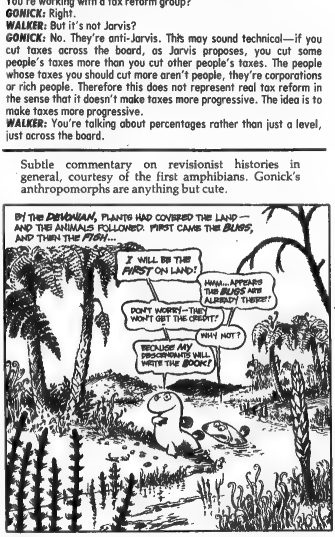
GONICK: Right.

WALKER: But it's not Jarvis?

GONICK: No. They're anti-Jarvis. This may sound technical—if you cut taxes across the board, as Jarvis proposes, you cut some people's taxes more than you cut other people's taxes. The people whose taxes you should cut more aren't people, they're corporations or rich people. Therefore this does not represent real tax reform in the sense that it doesn't make taxes more progressive. The idea is to make taxes more progressive.

WALKER: You're talking about percentages rather than just a level, just across the board.

Subtle commentary on revisionist histories in general, courtesy of the first amphibians. Gonick's anthropomorphs are anything but cute.


BY THE DEVONIAN, PLANTS HAD COVERED THE LAND — AND THE ANIMALS FOLLOWED. FIRST CAME THE BUGS, AND THEN THE FISH...
I WILL BE THE FIRST ON LAND!
HMM... APPEARS THE BUGS ARE ALREADY THERE!
DON'T WORRY—THEY WON'T GET THE CREDIT!
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE MY DESCENDANTS WILL WRITE THE BOOKS!

THE AVERAGE TAXPAYER'S INCOME IS SPENT MOSTLY ON NECESSITIES, LEAVING PRACTICALLY NOTHING FOR SAVINGS OR LUXURIES.
IN OTHER WORDS:
AMERICAN LUXURIES LIKE TAXES!
TAX RATES SHOULD GO UP AS INCOME RISES
THIS IS KNOWN AS PROGRESSIVE TAXATION.
YOUR TAXPAYER, ON THE OTHER HAND, PAYS A TINY FRACTION OF THEIR EARNINGS ON NECESSITIES AND CAN THEREFORE AFFORD TO PAY A HIGHER RATE.
IT'S A COMMUNIST PLOT TO TAKE AWAY MY PRIVATE ARMY!
NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE ABILITY-TO-PAY PHILOSOPHY HAS HAD ITS SHARE OF DETRACTORS DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS.
IN MANY CASES, THESE ARGUMENTS HAVE SOUNDED JUST LIKE EARLIER OPPOSITION TO THE INCOME TAX ITSELF. "PAINTING" TAX RATES DISCOURAGES HARD WORK, FINANCES SLOTHS, AND SO ON.
THE CASE HAS PUT MOST FLAMES BY ANDREW MELLON, A BANKER, INDUSTRIALIST, CABINET MEMBER, AND BILLIONAIRE OF THE EARLY 1900'S
"THE PROSPERITY OF THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES DEPENDS ON THE GOOD FORTUNE AND LIGHT TAXES OF THE RICH."

BLOOD FROM A STONE included a very complete overview of the history of the American income tax.

GONICK: Yeah, right, exactly. The theoretical principle that taxes are based on is the principle of ability to pay. So that if someone has more money he can afford to pay a higher portion of his income in taxes.

WALKER: Maybe the same proportion, but a higher amount of money.

GONICK: No, a higher proportion. A higher percentage. You look at the income tax tables, you see at $10,000 you probably pay 12% of your income. If you make $50,000, you pay 35%. This has been going on since 1910, but it's continually being eroded by what are called loopholes, which are various exemptions and so forth from taxation that corporations, investors, and such can take away from their income. So the idea is to always wage the struggle to make taxation more progressive. And Jarvis doesn't do that, he just cuts taxes. So the reason that taxes are going up, the reason for Jarvis-Gann, let's put it that way, is that real estate taxes, property taxes, in California went up very rapidly. People had to do something about it. The reason why property taxes in California went up so drastically is that the share of taxes that corporations had been paying had been steadily going down over 25 years or so. So what should've happened is that the ordinary people's real estate taxes should've been cut and the loss of tax revenue that happened as a result of that should've been extracted from corporations and rich individuals. But that isn't what Jarvis-Gann did. Jarvis-Gann cuts for everybody. Now obviously if you walk around San Francisco you see that there's plenty of wealth out there that's being frittered away on Mercedes and all sorts of ridiculous things, that could be used to improve schools, parks, all kinds of things.

WALKER: I've been getting confused about economics. I've read a couple of books, like ***ECONOMIC SANITY OR COLLAPSE...***

WALKER: I don't know it.

GONICK: It's by Gerald Zoffer. The basic idea is that we are not a money system anymore, thanks to inflation.

WALKER: What are we?

GONICK: A credit system. They lump bank accounts in the same breath as credit cards, because it isn't money, it's ledger entries.

WE MODERNS FIND IT HARD TO IMAGINE THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS AS THEY REALLY WERE, BECAUSE WE'RE SO USED TO SEEING THEM DRAWN IN THAT FLAT, FORMAL, "EGYPTIAN" STYLE!
THE WAY OUT OF THIS, IN MY OPINION, IS TO REALIZE THAT EGYPTIAN ART WAS LIKE CARTOONING!
THE EGYPTIANS LIKED THEIR PICTURES TO TELL A STORY, SO THEY INVENTED A STYLE WHICH PORTRAYED THE ACTION—AND LEFT SPACE FOR THE WORDS— IN A CLEAR, CONCISE WAY!!
TO THEM, THIS LOOKED LIFELIKE!
SO THE BEST WAY TO IMAGINE THE EGYPTIANS—AND MANY OTHER ANCIENT PEOPLES—IS TO SEE THEM AS THEY SAW THEMSELVES: IN CARTOON FORMAT!
HERE WE GO!

Gonick's mock-serious narrator conducts the reader into the past. The narrator does not resemble Gonick.

GONICK: Yeah, right.

WALKER: And we need a way to stabilize the credit. The book also talks about replacing the income tax with an overall sales tax at the retail level.

GONICK: But, you see, the sales tax is a highly regressive tax because it actually taxes poor people a larger percentage of their income than it taxes rich people. A poor person's disposable income mostly goes towards purchases so that's a tax on most of his income. A rich person's income does not mostly go towards purchases.[1]

WALKER: It goes toward investment.

GONICK: Yeah, some part of it goes toward taxes—5%, 6%.

WALKER: Talking about economics and comics—how about Carl Barks? You're a fan of his, aren't you?

GONICK: Oh, yeah, Forgot about him, didn't I? I always read ***UNCLE SCROOGE*** as a kid, but when you read that Disney stuff you never realize that you're looking at the work of a cartoonist. You think it's industrial.

WALKER: He did some stories on economics, too.

GONICK: Well, there's that. I thought you were going to say something else when you said economics and comics, like how can you make a living doing comix? (Laughs)

WALKER: Well, that was going to be one of my questions. With your ***CARTOON KITCHEN*** strip and the ***UNIVERSE*** books, it seems to me that you spend a lot of your time over the drawing board.

GONICK: Yeah, it's a fulltime job. But I try and keep it only fulltime and not overtime.

WALKER: How do you get money to eat?

GONICK: Well, between those two things mostly. I do a few other little jobs, but that does enough.

WALKER: And you think the ***CARTOON HISTORY*** will stretch out for maybe twenty issues or so?

GONICK: Well, I've always said fifty, but so far what I thought was going to be three books has turned into four. Already it seems to get longer, progressively fatter.

WALKER: I had to read the last two a couple of times apiece before I got a good hold of them. You introduce so many characters so quickly that I lose track of where they go until I reread the books.

GONICK: That's actually a problem—I decided just before I started Number Five that I had to be a little more ruthless about cutting out information and keeping the format as open as it was in Volume One; so, basically, Volume Five is going to look like Volume One. It's going to be a lot easier to get hold of.

WALKER: Probably all to the good. And Three and Four are going to go into paperback?

GONICK: I don't know. Not immediately, no. We were talking this morning about Three, Four, Five, Six, and Seven, maybe.

WALKER: Sounds like it'd be a pretty big book, then.

GONICK: Yeah, about 250 pages. That's regular book length.

WALKER: Who's your favorite cartoonist right now?

GONICK: Long pause here. Let's see, who do I read? Well, I like Kliban, and I like M.K. Brown—I like a lot of cartoonists. I like Shelton, I like Gahan Wilson, I like Garry Trudeau, I sort of like Rodriguez, I like Feiffer—you know, one thing that alarms me, reviewing in my mind what I've just said, is how much that graphic content of cartoons has fallen over the years. If you look at Kelly, you'll see beautiful drawings; if you look at Capp, too. And that's been one of the hallmarks of the best undergrounds, the devotion to nice drawing, but there's not that much of it anymore.

WALKER: Why is that, would you say?

GONICK: I know what it is. It's because of what's happened in newspapers. The amount of space for each strip is so small that there's no room for nice drawing anymore.

WALKER: Some strips have had to throw out Ben Day Zip-a-tone altogether.

GONICK: Yeah, and the lettering takes up half the panel.

WALKER: And with the Sunday pages, the big bugaboo is the page that must be able to fit any format.

GONICK: I've done that.

WALKER: ***FUNKY WINKERBEAN*** down to four panels.

GONICK: Right, that's right. But there's more room in the Sunday pages for the panels. They're three inches wide or something.

WALKER: That always reminds me of Howard Cruse and his pages that look like dailies and Sundays.

GONICK: ***BAREFOOTZ***? I guess. His drawing is extremely clean if that's what you mean.

WALKER: No, I mean the format; he has strips and full-pagers with logos. But backtracking a little—you say you've had to do some adjustable formats?

GONICK: With my ***FOOTNOTES*** cartoons?

WALKER: Did you do ***FOOTNOTES*** before you started the ***UNIVERSE*** series?

GONICK: No. ***FOOTNOTES*** are part of the History. Originally it was exactly that thing you were saying before about Sunday strips being sectioned so parts can be thrown away.

WALKER: And?

GONICK: So when I did the ***BOSTON HISTORY*** I made a footnote at the bottom of something that would be discardable in case they wanted to go from half a page to a third of a page. Then I liked the idea of having that extra little information in there to break it up, so when I started doing the history books I thought, well, I gotta do the footnotes, and we thought instead of trying to torture the format of the book itself by making strips out of each page, we'll just send the footnotes out as strips and then put them in a book. I thought, I can do a book in sixteen weeks, right? (Laughs) And I'd do a footnote every three pages. So that's what happened. Turns out I can't do a book every sixteen weeks. So I end up having to do a lot of extra footnotes that never show up in the books.

WALKER: But ***FOOTNOTES*** are a strip within the Rip Off Syndicate, right?

BEYOND A CERTAIN POINT, HEBREW ORIGINS ARE LOST IN THE MISTY PAST. THEN ABRAHAM, HIS WIFE SARAH, HIS NEPHEW LOT, AND THEIR SERVANTS AND FLOCKS EMERGED FROM UR IN SUMER, HEADING FOR GREENER PASTURES IN CANAAN.
BUMP
WATCH IT!
OOF!
CLUNK
WHY CANAAN?
I HEAR IT'S THE PLACE TO INVADE.
ONCE THEY ARRIVED, IT'S SAID, ABRAHAM AND LOT FATHERED MANY TRIBES*. WE'LL SKIP THE DETAILS AND JUST MENTION THAT ABRAHAM BEGAT ISAAC...

GONICK: Yeah, when the Syndicate's running. When the Syndicate *was* running, I should say. It'll probably start again in the fall, by the way. I shouldn't sound too pessimistic.

WALKER: I *thought* it ran as a comic strip in its own right.

GONICK: Right, and I usually do them ahead of time because I have to.

WALKER: Yeah, I noticed they've got the characters in the footnotes looking like the characters in the books themselves.

GONICK: Oh yeah? I noticed they don't always look the same.

WALKER: I mean Moses looks Egyptian, Saul has a big nose, etc.

GONICK: Oh, right, right. Those were done later, probably.

WALKER: Do you have any aspirations toward movies, feature-length cartoons, whatever?

GONICK: I must admit when I heard that Mel Brooks was making a movie called ***THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, PART ONE,*** I had a sinking sensation in my guts, but—nothing specific. I think ***THE CARTOON HISTORY*** is susceptible to animation and I'd like to see something done in that direction. I don't want to do it myself, though.

WALKER: I got a much better high from Number Four than I did from ***WHOLLY MOSES.***

GONICK: I liked ***WHOLLY MOSES,*** actually. It dragged horribly in places, but...

WALKER: I liked a few parts of it. I liked James Coco scraping the salted Larraine Newman to season his stew.

GONICK: I felt part of the problem with the movie was that the audience didn't know The Bible well enough to get half the jokes.

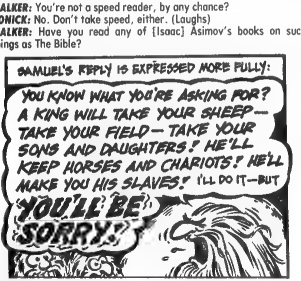
WALKER: You have read an impressive amount. That's one thing about your books—they have such big bibliographies..

GONICK: Yeah, well, I haven't read a novel in years; I don't have time.

WALKER: You're not a speed reader, by any chance?

GONICK: No. Don't take speed, either. (Laughs)

WALKER: Have you read any of [Isaac] Asimov's books on such things as The Bible?


SAMUEL'S REPLY IS EXPRESSED MORE FULLY:
YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ASKING FOR? A KING WILL TAKE YOUR SHEEP— TAKE YOUR FIELD— TAKE YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS! HE'LL KEEP HORSES AND CHARIOTS! HE'LL MAKE YOU HIS SLAVES! I'LL DO IT—BUT YOU'LL BE SORRY!

GONICK: No. I've read some of Asimov's science fiction, but—Paul Mavrides wants a game of ping-pong. He's a revolutionary by temperament.

WALKER: How about the move from Boston to San Francisco?

GONICK: Ah, I've discovered—I've been here for three years—I found there's a lot more opportunity for cartoonists in San Francisco. There's a publishing scene, there's more cartoon consciousness in the sense that people appreciate it more. There are few, very few cartoonists in Boston. The graphic sense of the Boston populace in general is not very high. There is a graphic style there now that predominates in fact, but it's not in cartoons. So in that sense the move has turned out to be good. However, the first year here was very difficult, in many different ways—hard to plug in somewhere. I could've started working here at Rip Off, actually, as soon as I arrived, but I didn't. I sorta took the lay of the land for a year and realized this was the best place for me.

WALKER: So you lived pretty hand-to-mouth for the first year. You must patronize your local library an awful lot.

GONICK: That's true. You see, every time I go in there I always have overdue books. I think of myself as a one-man answer to Proposition 13—I support my library.

WALKER: How far ahead of your books do you read? That didn't come out the way I meant it to...

GONICK: How far ahead of what I'm writing am I reading? Less and less far ahead. That is, I've done all the basic reading already for ancient Greece and some on Rome, but I've got some big gaps to fill because I'm not going to do Rome before I do China and India. I've done some reading on India, but my Chinese history is pretty deficient right now.

WALKER: The trouble with history is that there's just so much of it.

GONICK: That may seem like a lot of trouble but that gives me a lot of room to play around in, right?

WALKER: Well, yeah. It's just hard for me to keep it all straight in my head. I always have this fear that sometime I may meet Benjamin Franklin or one of that crowd and he'll deride me for not knowing as much history as they knew in the olde days.

GONICK: I think that's true. One of the problems is, history books by and large tend to make it difficult to just keep the story straight. It's a rare historian that can just tell a story. They always have to argue with each other, present many, many different theories about what happened.

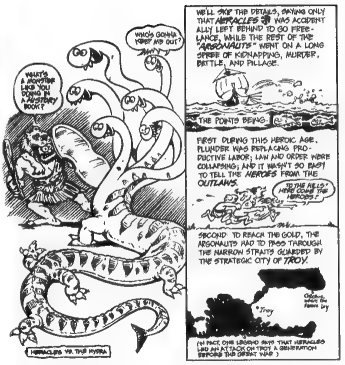
WALKER: Talk about historians and different ways of presenting material. Are you familiar with James Burke's ***CONNECTIONS?***

GONICK: Nope.

WALKER: He had a BBC series that made it to public television over here.

GONICK: Oh, yeah. A friend of mine was recommending it. I just saw a little of it.

WALKER: He had this way of presenting history—as everything is interconnected, it's very hard to follow progress down a single line. What he'd do is take one thing and follow it down to the present day and use that to jump back to olden times. He'll go like from British castles to changing the eating habits to dinnerware to steam heat to


WHO'S GONNA HURT US OUT?
WHAT'S A MONSTER LIKE THAT DOING IN A MYTHOLOGY BOOK?
WE'LL SKIP THE DETAILS, SAYING ONLY THAT HERACLES BY HAS ACCIDENT ALLY LEFT BEHIND TO GO FREE-LANCE, WHILE THE REST OF THE "ARGONAUTS" WENT ON A LONG SPREE OF KIDNAPPING, MURDER, BATTLE, AND PILLAGE.
THE POINTS BEING:
FIRST DURING THIS HEROIC AGE, PLUNDER WAS BIG A-GANG PRODUCTIVE WORK, LAW AND ORDER WERE COLLAPSING, AND IT WASN'T SO EASY TO TELL THE HEROES FROM THE OUTLAWS.
SECOND TO REACH THE GOLD, THE ARGONAUTS HAD TO PASS THROUGH THE NARROW STRAITS GUARDED BY THE STRATEGIC CITY OF TROY.
IN FACT ONE LEGEND SAYS THAT HERACLES LED AN ATTACK ON TROY A GENERATION BEFORE THE GREAT WAR!
HERACLES VS. THE HYDRA

Gonick's unique blend of puns, whimsy, and facts constitutes one of the most palatable presentations of history ever presented.

nyions to space rockets, something like that. He sees history as a succession of developments and inventions and progress.[1]

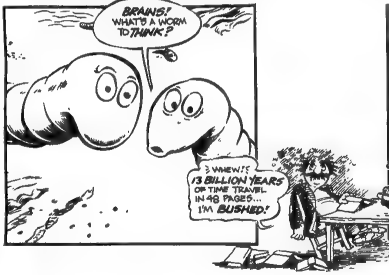
GONICK: Yeah, it's good to make those connections. On the other hand, it's hard to understand them if you don't know what the whole story is somehow. I think that's a weakness of this kind of—I can't talk about it, I haven't seen it.

WALKER: So you try to give the whole picture?

GONICK: (Laughs) Impossible!

WALKER: Well, broader chunks, perhaps?

GONICK: As a story. A story is something to hang all this on, really. Questions of how much to hang on it and how much space to devote just to storytelling is one of the problems that I have had.



THE SAME AFFLICTION, IT'S SAID STOPPED MUCH FROM THE GREAT LATENT LANDS, AND MARK THE ARRIVAL OF CIVILIZING INFLUENCE.
PLOTUS WORK LABORIOUS AND CAN USE MAKE MORE WITH PAPERS AND THAT IT
SO MIRACLES FILLED LAND WITH HIS OWN LIFE
THIS STORY TOOK NOW HEROES AND NOT ALWAYS GOOD, JUST BUSSING!
3 (B.C.) COMES 3 BILLION YEARS OF TIME TRAVEL
CRUNCH

WALKER: Have you been heavily criticized for your work?

GONICK: Not with the ***UNIVERSE*** series. It's been basically favorable in response. I had some nasty letters back in Boston from Puritans and Indian-haters. I did this series on when was the first big Indian insurrection.

WALKER: They must love Jaxon.

GONICK: Jackson? Andrew Jackson? Jackson who? Who Jackson?

WALKER: The guy who did ***COMANCHE MOON.***

GONICK: Oh, ***Jaxon!*** Jack Jackson. I don't know.

WALKER: They probably didn't read it.

GONICK: It wasn't out yet. This was '76.

WALKER: You hadn't been a practicing artist, I mean you hadn't been working with pen and ink all through college?

GONICK: Right. I started drawing again in graduate school. What happened was I found an implement that I could use—a flexible quill that would produce something that I thought looked good enough.

WALKER: Really. Do you still use that?

GONICK: No. It's a very flexible point and I thought, My God! This is what Walt Kelly used! So I started drawing with it a lot and getting these effects where the line suddenly gets thicker and thinner. Then I learned Kelly used a brush, so I switched to a brush.

WALKER: Any formal instruction? Life-art classes?

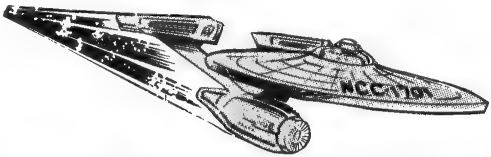
GONICK: Oh, every now and then. High school art classes, like that. No art school.

WALKER: Well, thank you very much Larry Gonick and we'll be waiting for the further issues of ***THE CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE.***

GONICK: Thank you. (Picks up a ping-pong paddle.) Service!

1. Zoffer's book does deal with these problems, or tries to. In the case of comprehensive sales tax, poor people would pay a proportionately smaller tax than the rich. However, Zoffer doesn't mention how the merchant tells the difference between the poor and the rich, or even the cutoff point in his own reckoning. The wonderful thing about economics is that you know just as much after two hours of study as you do after two years.

2. In ***THE AVENGERS #197***, The Vision is shown watching ***CONNECTIONS.*** If I didn't take this opportunity to mention it, you'd never know about it.



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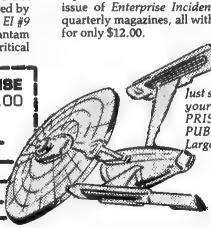

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St. Louis, MO. SPECTOR COMICS CLUB. Meets at Century Bowl, 7508 Michigan, 1:00-4:00 p.m. Contact: Anthony Gladish, 3917 Ohio Street, St. Louis, MO 63118.

Urbana, IL. CHAMPAIGN-URBANA COMIC CLUB. Meets at the Illinois Union Building, Room 215, 712 W. Illinois, Urbana, every Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Contact: Mel DeSart.

Vancouver, B.C., Canada. VANCOUVER COMIC BOOK CLUB. Publishes the VCBC Bulletin and sponsors conventions. (V-Con). Contact: VCBC, P.O. Box 48873, Bentall Sta., Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7X1A8.

COMICS CONVENTIONS

July 23-26, San Diego Con, El Cortez Centre, 7th & Ash St., San Diego, Ca. Comics, panels, art workshops, movies, animation films, Ink Pot awards, plus a seemingly endless guest list. Admission: $20.00 for all four days.

July 24-26, Atlanta Comics and Fantasy Fair, Dunfey Hotel, I-75 & Howell Mill Road, Atlanta, Ga. Guests include Michael Whelan and Richard Matheson.

Aug. 1-2, Creation Con in Philadelphia, Aheraton Hotel, 1795 Kennedy Blvd., Philadelphia, Pa. Panels, Auctions, movies, contests, and guests. Admission: $5.50 per-day, $10.00 for both.

Sept. 19-20, Steel City Comics Con, Duquesne University, Pittsburg, Pa. Baseball cards, comic books, and movie material. Admission: 50¢ a day.

Aug. 2, Western PA Comic Con, '81, Inn America, New Stanton, PA. Dealers room. Admission: 75¢

Oct. 10, 11, Minneapolis Comics Convention, Hotel Leamington, 10th St. & 3rd Ave., S., Minneapolis, MN. Guests: Jim Shooter, Ken Fletcher. Activities include an animation film festival, an art show, an auction. Admission: $3.00.

COMICS FEATURE will be happy to list ***your*** covention date and/or club information. Just send us complete information, including dates, times, and people to contact for further information. We are also interested in listing any art shows, special museum exhibitions, and similar activities which would be of interest to our readers. All listing information should be sent to: "Fandom Almanac," ***COMICS FEATURE***, 127 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, Ma. 02138.

GETTING TOGETHER

by Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: Remember, we still want to hear from those of you reading this who have recollections of those early days of comics fandom. We can easily go back in our coverage to make additions or corrections, so do write to us with both. Write to ***Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060***.]

For three full years, the world and comics fandom had changed. Since comics fandom had begun to form, events in "the real world" had made the country a different place from what it had been when ***XERO #1*** first saw print. Racial unrest and turmoil and rebellion against officially sanctioned segregation had come to a head, and a turning point in American history occurred with the assassination of John Kennedy. In the intervening years, John Glenn had become the first American in space, the first privately-owned satellite had been launched to speed TV programs across the Atlantic, compulsory prayer in public schools had been outlawed, and the first military companies from the U.S. had arrived in Viet Nam. In a different sort of cross-cultural event, the Beatles had become increasingly popular in America.

Now, it was 1964, which turned out to be a year in which fandom and the world at large witnessed events that affected each other for years to come.

During 1964, a civil rights act went into effect which fundamentally moved the United States into the 20th Century racially. That same year, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution went into effect, committing this country to behave as though a declaration of war was in effect with Viet Nam. President Johnson was elected as a "peace candidate," and campus unrest began to escalate as racial unrest gradually settled down after a "long, hot Summer" of riots in northern cities.

Against this backdrop, the slow expansion of comics fandom took place. If it seems a bit odd to emphasize national events at this point, keep in mind that most of the population of that comics fandom was intensely affected by all of it. Comics fandom consisted almost entirely of young people of draft age, mostly male, often in high-school or college settings. Few were members of racial minorities, but fandom was never a deliberately segregationist group and—feeling itself to be a minority—encouraged "membership" by everyone. Politics, however, were another story, and there were comics fans of all views, though radicalization had not become extreme (despite Goldwater's statement that "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice".

Whatever the outside forces were, comics fandom suddenly put on a growing spurt. Fan meetings began—and increased. The first weekend fan party was held by (yes, him again) Jerry Bails.

Ow, wow! A fan party! Big deal! Well, yes, it *was* a big deal. Whereas small numbers of fans in large communities might have met from time to time before then, this was the first time that fans from many different areas got together in a weekend event. Jerry lived in Detroit and volunteered his house for the purpose of what some called an "Alley Tally." You may recall that the fan awards ("Alley" Awards) for 1963 had been voted on in twenty-eight categories—and that several of those categories had been write-ins. (For example, fans could list what strip they'd most like to see revived, what artist they'd prefer on ***SEA DEVILS***, and so on.) This meant that the chore

Fandom Zone

of counting out about two hundred fifty ballots was a staggering one, and Jerry thought a group of fans might as well stagger together. We came from Cleveland, other fans came from other areas of the Midwest, and we all descended upon Jerry and his wife and children for two days of partying and talking and ballot-counting in Detroit.

There was a spirit of fun and good will and delight at meeting friends known only by mail. We can recall sitting at a table to discuss art with Ronn Foss. And we can recall how everyone's punch-drunk total exhaustion increased, as fans tried late at night to keep long strings of figures straight. At one point, Mike Tuohey stood on his head in a corner, wigged out by endless combinations suggested on ballot after ballot in the category in the category which would decide what cross-over of DC heroes fans most want to see in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD***. (Hawkman and Flash won as a combination, but you might be hard-put to imagine some of the more far-fetched ones.)

It was a delight (though Jerry and his family must have had constitutions of iron to survive it with the cheery good will they maintained throughout).

If a fan party had been all that 1964 offered in the history of fannish developments, it would still have been a turning point. But other things occurred in 1964, day-to-day tastes of the fans being reflected in the fourth Alley Awards (this time tallied in 1965 by Paul Gambaccini for The Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors, just formed). (Results ran in ***THE COMIC READER #35-#37***, March 1965 - May 1965. The Executive Board was still nominating, though by now it had changed composition and was elected by sporadic vote.)

You'll notice that fan tastes were becoming slightly more diversified. For the first time, four companies were represented with awards, though Marvel and DC still took the lion's share.

The best fan comic strip appeared in a fanzine new in 1964, one that was one of the very best, in our opinion. Born as ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED***, it was edited by Bill Spicer and became one of the journals that emphasized an almost scholarly approach to comics art. The tone was light-hearted, but Spicer maintained an interest in providing thought-provoking looks at the problems inherent in creating comics art. In fact, ***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED*** became in later years ***GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE***, and the stories it ran (for it was primarily another fanzine of fan-produced comic art) were mostly intended to be more than just another super-hero pastiches. EC's influence was strongly felt among FI's contributors, and methods of story-telling were explored here.

We did an issue of ***COMIC ART*** in 1964, and it elaborates the picture of that year in fandom. It cost us about a dime to send a 44-page fanzine, and we were griping that that was a considerable part of the expense of producing a fanzine. (Check the postage on the next medium-size fanzine you get in the mail to find another way fanning has changed in the last seventeen years; by the time you read this, costs will have risen *again*.) It wasn't too difficult to maintain fannish contacts by mail when a first-class letter cost a nickel. Ah, but the ZIP Code had recently taken hold, and that (we were assured) would help to keep postage costs down.

Another trend began in 1964, we note in looking through ***COMIC ART #5***. Don wrote, in an open note to Stan Lee: "If you *must* publish serials, won't you (a) write the whole story at once, so the halves will be of comparable quality, and (b) warn the reader at the

THE ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1964

I. Pro Category

1. Best Adventure Hero Comic Book: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (39%)
2. Best Regularly Published Fantasy Comic: ***FORBIDDEN WORLDS***.
3. Best Humorous Comic Book: ***HERBIE*** (42%)
4. Best Miscellaneous Fiction: ***SGT. FURY AND HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (65%)
5. Best Editor: Stan Lee
6. Best Writer: Stan Lee
7. Best Pencil Artist: Carmine Infantino (26%)
8. Best Inking Artist: Murphy Anderson (47%)
9. Best Comic-Book Cover: ***DETECTIVE #329***
10. Best Short Story: ***"Doorway to the Unknown" (FLASH #148)***
11. Best Novel: ***"Captain America Joins the Avengers" (AVENGERS #4)***
12. Best Giant Comic: ***SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL #1*** (50%)
13. Comic Regularly Displaying Best Color Work: ***MAGNUS ROBOT FIGHTER***
14. Worst Regularly Published Comic: ***WONDER WOMAN*** (46%)
15. Best Hero: Spider-Man
16. Best Supporting Character: The Thing (50% +)
17. Best Villain: Doctor Doom
18. Best Group of Characters: Fantastic Four
19. Best New Strip or Book: Captain America
20. Strip Most Desired for Revival: Spectre (29 votes)

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II. Fan Category (on a scale of 5)

F1. Best Article in a Fanzine: TIE ***"Lee"*** (Rick Weingroff) 4.21; ***"One Man's Family"*** (Roy Thomas) 4.21

F2. Best Regular Fanzine Feature: ***"Information Center"*** (Bob Jennings) 4.17

F3. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"Adam Link"*** (Bindler/Spicer/Berry) 4.61

F4. Best Ditto/Mimeo Cover: ***BATMANIA #1*** (Biljo White) 4.46

F5. Best Cover (Other Reproduction): ***ALTER EGO #1*** (Biljo White) 4.61

F6. Best Fan Fiction: ***"Nemesis of Evil"*** (Victor Baron) 4.23

F7. Best Fan Project: ***"Who's Who"*** and ***"Supplement"*** (Jerry Bails and Larry Lattanzi) 4.32

F8. Best Fanzine: ***ALTER EGO #7*** (Roy Thomas) 4.67

beginning that the story is continued? Today, it's taken for granted that most Marvel stories are continued, and no one is ever surprised when episodes vary widely in quality. Obviously, Marvel's answer to both questions was, "No."

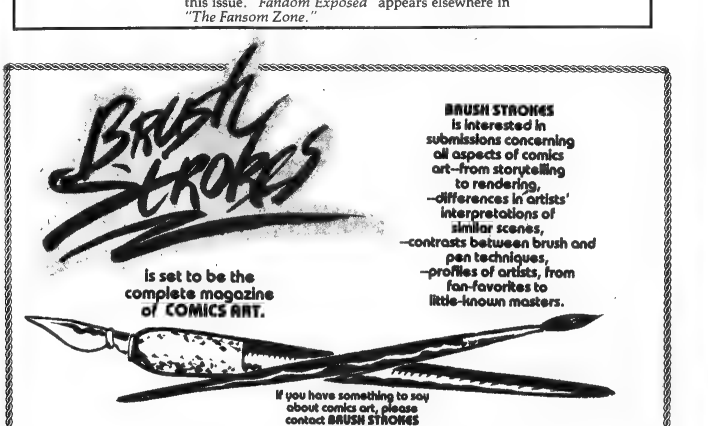
But there was another event in 1964 that was but the first of countless events that today occur all over the nation. We ran a two-part article (one part by Dick Lupoff, one part by Larry Ivie) on it for the conclusion of ***COMIC ART #5***. It was the first—the very first—comics convention. There had been fan meetings in Detroit and Chicago and at the home of Russ Manning. But this was an actual, official convention. Comicon I had a program with speakers from the industry and interludes in which trading and conversation among fans went on. It was not an enormous con committee, nor was it staged at a hotel; there had been a committee and grand plans, but both foundered. One fan, Bernie Bubnis, picked up the pieces and almost singlehandedly managed to put on the event for half a day in a New York City hall just off 14th Street. Larry Ivie remarked, "In reality, the past three science fiction conventions—with their hordes of 'living' comic book heroes and villains at the costume balls, and comic book slide talks, and comic book sale areas—presented far more for the comic book fans than the first actual comic con." The con was plagued by a lack of publicity, a hard-to-locate hall (with many prospective attendees simply unable to find the place), and a time impossible for many adults to make (a weekday afternoon). But it happened, it happened in 1964, and Bernie Bubnis was responsible; that it happened at all was to his credit.

1964 brough fans face to face, but October brought us a new sort of meeting place. That month, another aspect of fandom appeared, once again formed from Jerry Bails' enthusiasm: ***CAPA-alpha***, the first amateur publishing association of comics fandom. Jerry argued to an assortment of fans who knew each other that they'd save time and money by substituting a quarterly small-circulation fanzine among themselves. This way, open letters to the group would substitute for first-class, individual letters. It seemed logical enough (and, indeed, amateur publishing associations had flourished for decades in science-fiction fandom). Jerry was the first Central Mailer and set up the plan. Dues covered postage; minimum activity from each member was four pages a quarter; mailings were monthly; the first issue came out in October. It took us some time to be convinced, but we eventually succumbed to Jerry's invitation, and ***CAPA-alpha*** became a forum for fandom's publishers, eventually spawning such things as Mike Barrier's ***FUNNYWORLD***. ●

Next:

"FANDOM EXPOSED!"

Due to our double-*FEATURE* format, we are presenting two installments of *"Fandom Origins"* this issue. *"Fandom Exposed"* appears elsewhere in *"The Fansom Zone."*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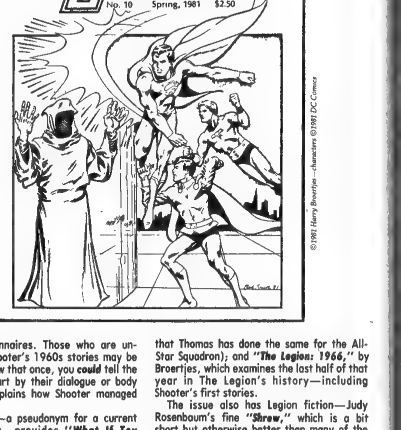
QUALIFIED PRAISE

by Carl Docks

***THE LEGION OUTPOST* # 10, 8½x11", 64 pages for $2.50, from Harry C. Broertjes, 566 NE 20th St. #9, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33305.**



The ***OUTPOST*** was one of the central fanzines of the 1970s. A slight exaggeration, perhaps—but it was certainly one of the most important. When The Legion Fan Club started in 1972, ***"The Legion of Super-Heroes"*** was an infrequent back-up in ***SUPERBOY***. The club was the rallying point for some hundreds of LSH fans, attracted by the fine stories of Jim Shooter and others in the 1960s. The LFC eventually metamorphosed into Interlac, the amateur publishing alliance devoted to The Legion; with a regular source of information and opinion, there was less need for ***THE OUTPOST***, and, despite attempts to publish it, the tenth issue became more of a running joke than anything else.

The tenth issue is finally here; Ken Gale, ***FEATURE*** staffer Jay Zilber, and Harry Broertjes teamed up to get it out and done with. The result is a tad uneven, but almost entirely enjoyable.

The low point, indeed, is the cover. Bob Smith's effort depicts Superboy, Mon-El, and Ultra Boy—ostensibly The Legion's three most powerful members—trying to batter their way through a force field The Time Trapper has created. The piece lacks movement and dynamism—Ultra Boy is just floating in mid-air. The nine previous covers are reprinted on the inside back cover; of those with art, the tenth is the least interesting of the lot. The back cover is much better: by Shooter and Andy Mushunsky, it shows what a ***LEGION*** cover would look like if Marvel published The Legion. (Although the sketch was done some years ago for Interlac, the logo looks suspiciously like the new one that ***LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES*** sports.)

Interviews are big things in fanzines these days, and the ***OUTPOST*** has two: one is a six-page interview with Roy Thomas. Thomas is no longer on the strip, but this is a very good look at how a creator approached a strip which has a loyal, highly critical following. The other interview features Len Wein and Mike Barr, editors of ***LEGION***. The five-page interview suffers mostly from the pair's lack of preparation; they had just been given the book, and were still feeling their way through. Still, both discuss the methods and ideas they'd had about the book, allowing the reader to see how editors work.

Jim Shooter contributes a two-page piece on how he created the characterizations for individual Legionnaires. Those who are unfamiliar with Shooter's 1960s stories may be surprised to know that once, you *could* tell the Legionnaires apart by their dialogue or body English. This explains how Shooter managed that.

Michael Ellis—a pseudonym for a current Marvel staffer—provides ***"What If Toy Rhombus Wrote The Legion of Super-Heroes?"*** It is fairly funny, but the short length (three pages) keeps it from being more.

Other feature articles include ***"An Open Note of Suicide"*** by Kim Metzger, in which he officially apologizes for designing Saturn Girl's new costume and paving the way for many of the later atrocities—and takes the appropriate punishment; ***"A Legion of Writers,"*** by ***FEATURE*** writer Rich Morrissey, which provides an overview of the people who have scripted The Legion's adventures over the decades; ***"Born Under a Triple Sun,"*** Len Rosenberg's excellent analysis of the astrological backgrounds of the Legionnaires (in their interview, Barr and Wein mention that Thomas has done the same for the All-Star Squadron); and ***"The Legion: 1966,"*** by Broertjes, which examines the last half of that year in The Legion's history—including Shooter's first stories.

The issue also has Legion fiction—Judy Rosenbaum's fine ***"Shrew,"*** which is a bit short but otherwise better than many of the comic stories themselves. The rest of the issue is ***"Speculations,"*** with Paula O'Keefe outlining society on Orando, Princess Projectra's home planet; Tom Bierbaum discussing politics on Matter-Eater Lad's home planet; Carol A. Strickland suggesting how to make Dream Girl more powerful (or at least more interesting) without changing her a bit; Joe Fillice on the physiological nature of super-powers (a potentially interesting article, ruined by the gimmick Fillice chose to employ); and Elizabeth M. Smith on the history of the language Interlac. Columns and editorials from Broertjes, Zilber, Mike Flynn (the founder of Legion fandom), Strickland, and Gale are the last of the contents.

It's a nice, hefty zine, one that will provide plenty of reading for a couple of weeks after you receive it. The ***OUTPOST*** is a fine example of the way an intelligent group of people can take a strip with an interesting concept and background—although the published results do not always fulfill that promise—and discuss that feature intelligently. Fans of some of comicdom's other super-groups could take long lessons from this zine.

Qualified praise? Not on your life. Get this one. (By the way, it's already gone into a second printing, and a third seems likely, according to Broertjes, so you won't by any means be alone.)

WEIRD FAAN FICTION #5, January, 1981. 8½x11, 44 pages for $2.00 postpaid, from Brooklyn Bridge Publications, Room 303, 15 Park Row, New York, NY 10038.

I love to explain "faan fiction." The first step is to explain "faan." A faan is a fan who is as interested in fandom as in the comics themselves—a person who enjoys the friendships made through fandom. And faan fiction—well, that's fictional stories (or, frequently, *semi*-fictional stories) about faans and fans.

Sound like something out of ***GREEN ACRES***? Well, faan fiction has been around for a couple decades now, and, as a genre of literature, has managed to produce its own stars. The acknowledged premier writer of faan fiction—if not, then at least the best-known—is Dwight Decker, who published ***TRUE FAN ADVENTURE THEATER*** in the 1960s. A story of Decker's, ***"Before the Code,"*** is reprinted here, featuring a behind-the-scenes look at comics publishers of the 1950s. Set in a studio, the story looks at the different ways in which publishers and creators looked at their efforts.

WEIRD FAAN FICTION #5, a prime example of a genre which, according to Carl Docks, "has managed to produce its own stars."

John Stockman—one of the other top faan fiction writers, considered the founder of the genre in comics fandom—presents the issue's first story. "Today I Steal" features a man who returns to comics fandom after a hiatus, but not the way most of us return. He simply steals old comics from a local used book shop. The characterization is top-notch here; Stockman allows plenty of room for it, and he doesn't fail to do it well.

J.J. Pierce's "Tortures of the Danged" features Karl Vomact, science fiction fan who has the semi-traditional contempt for comics fans (an exaggerated trait). On his way to the year's Worldcon, in Washington, D.C., he is mugged; to be able to stay, he must work in the huckster's room (dealer's room to comics convention-goers) for some spare money and a spot to sleep on the floor of the dealer's room. Pierce has fun with the characters, playing up the alleged differences between SF and comics fans, and poking a little fun at both groups. It's a funny story with some bizarre plot twists that combine to form a most entertaining work.

"Sleight of Hand" is a strip by editor Charles Spanier, Lari Davidson, and Andy Mushynsky, featuring Spanier's character, Pete Whitmore, Fan Detective. It's a nice, unpretentious little tale about a comics fan who sees a comic he wants at a higher price than he is willing to pay, and the method he uses to get that comic.

Kurt Erichsen contributes ***"The Athens Worldcon"***—a story of Eringodes Plostheropapa, science fiction fan from Atlantis. Eringodes has survived to today, and spends time telling what fandom was like in the good, ***really*** old days. This episode concerns the Kos Ankelysos Science Fiction Society's attempts to keep their token prankster supreme, Kragos Milles, from attending the Worldcon of 3244 BC. During the story, Eringodes interrupts himself to explain the differences between the fandoms of now and then, and occasionally the societies of now and then. The story moves a bit slowly because of the detail, but it is what makes the story so entertaining.

I can tell you what is in the issue—as I have—and I can provide a couple handy definitions—likewise—but faan fiction can only be experienced. It definitely should be experienced by fans, especially faan fiction by writers like these, who know how to tell an entertaining story. This zine is surely money well spent.

If you'd like your fanzine reviewed here in "Qualified Praise," send two copies to:

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c/o Carl Docks

FANDOM... EXPOSED!!

By Don and Maggie Thompson

[Note: We've been asking that readers who, like us, were part of the early days of comics fandom send us comments on ***"Fandom Origins."*** You'll remember that in our fourth column—the one on 1962—we wrote about the brief life of satire fandom and the excellent ***SMUDGE***, a fanzine produced by Joe Pilati, who ran early work by such talented people as Don Dohler, Jay Kinney, Jay Lynch, and Skip Williamson. Joe wrote to let us know what he's doing these days: "In my present work (I'm involved with a number of national labor union mags and sorta rad-lib outfits, such as they are), I have the occasional great pleasure of buying and using artwork from folks like Steve Stiles, Denis Kitchen and Peter Poplaski. Year after year goes by and I never seem to get around to publishing ***SMUDGE #5***. Mayhaps I could (or half-heartedly have) convinced folks like Elder, Lynch, Spiegelman, and youse to 'update' things you wrote or drew for ***SMUDGE*** in 1962-3. (Or to write or draw entirely new stuff, which I would intend to package in a 36-page offset mag with color covers or something.)"

You see? Old fen never die; they still scheme about putting out just one more issue. And satire fandom never died; it just sold to ***PLAYBOY***. If you were around in the Good Old Days (or have questions about them we've failed to answer), write us: Don and Maggie Thompson, 8786 Hendricks Road, Mentor, Ohio 44060.]

1965 was an incredible year for comics fandom. To begin with, it was the year that the rest of America discovered comics fandom.

Aside from features on existing comic strips and such, magazines had run no articles on comics collecting. All at once, that changed.

In its February 15, 1965 issue, ***NEWSWEEK*** ran a piece on "Superfans and Batmaniacs," and we all suddenly became known nationwide as a bunch of eccentrics who were loony enough to waste our time and money on funnybooks. Fans were shaken and nonplussed. Nor were they alone in being targets of national hilarity. The ***NEWSWEEK*** article picked up on the old canard about the possible homosexuality of Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson and tried to pass the reputation on to Peter Parker. That was the general level of the report on our microcosm.

That first article was followed by ones on the first international exhibition of comic strips (***TIME*** for March 5; ***NEWSWEEK*** for March 8) and on the "second annual convention of the Academy of Comic-Book Fans and Collectors" (***NEW YORKER*** for August 21).

Naturally, our files being what they are, we can't turn up any of the articles this month; in our "it's never too late" fashion, we are continuing the hunt. In the meantime, though, we recall that fandom was appalled at the patronizing attention it was given.

We weren't quite so taken aback. As we said at the time (in our fanzine for Jerry Bails' comics amateur publishing association):

"Now come on, people, what did you ***expect***!? What reactions have you been getting from the 'outside' world when you've talked of your hobby, anyway? Respectful interest and 'where do you go to sign up' responses? Or amused amazement? Children's literature is held in contempt by many so-called literates —what response can you expect, then, for comic art, which is regarded with contempt and dismay by promoters of children's literature?

"How can you blame people who never claimed to be doing other than writing for mass audiences for putting things in a way to appeal to that audience?

"We were delighted, ourselves, with the approach taken by ***NEWSWEEK***; we had feared something along the lines of, 'Hey, you know how much you can get for your old comics, everybody!?!?' Instead, that aspect was remarkably understated (even if we don't know of anybody who's ever paid $100 for ***ACTION #1***—or even asked that much for it)... And we were taken aback, rather, by the reactions of many fans, who say simply, 'I'm not a collector, so what the hell?' But a comic fan who does not care anything for the prices comics are commanding can't be too damned interested in comics."

Then we went into a discussion of the need to keep prices down. (Why is it that we always hear in the news media about some incredibly high price being "paid for" a certain comic long before we see that high price routinely on dealers' lists? Believe us, $100 for ***ACTION #1*** was not a routine price in early 1965. Almost as a matter of course, though, the ***reporting*** of a high price as average tends to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.)

Roy Thomas commented on the ***NEWSWEEK*** article that year in his apazine, and we reprinted it in our ***COMIC ART***; it was a supposed interview between ***NEWSWEEK*** and Roy (editor of ***ALTER-EGO***), ***"NEWSWEEK*** Meets ***ALTER-EGO"***:

NW: Tell me, when did you first ***become*** a comic-book fanatic?

RT: ***NEWSWEEK*** said we were fanatics; we didn't. We're no more fanatical than the average stamp- or coin-collector, and we read a lot more.

NW: (Over the sound of his scribbling) Hmm... overt denial... typical of type... (More audibly) Uh, Mr. Thomas, if you're not a fanatic, why are you willing to pay $100 for the June 1939 issue of ***ACTION COMICS?***

RT: I'm not.

NW: You're ***not***? But it says right here—***NEWSWEEK***, Feb. 15, 1965—that issue 'has

Fandom Zone

since become a $100 collector's item among the country's band of first-edition comic-book fanatics.'

RT: Well, *I* don't know of anybody who ever paid $100 for it. Personally, I've never even seen it ***advertised*** for that much. But then, I haven't really been ***looking.***

By the end of 1965, even more attention had been brought to the world of comics with the publication of Jules Feiffer's ***GREAT COMIC BOOK HEROES*** anthology which, for the first time in years, made classic super-hero stories available to a wide audience. Reprints came from ***SUPERMAN #1, SUPERMAN #3, BATMAN #1, FLASH #1, ALL-AMERICAN #16*** (first appearance of Green Lantern), ***ALL-STAR #1*** (for The Spectre), ***FLASH #5*** (for Hawkman), ***WONDER WOMAN #2, POLICE #1*** (first appearance of Plastic Man), ***CAPTAIN AMERICA #1***, two issues of ***MARVEL MYSTERY COMICS*** (for Sub-Mariner and a Torch-and-Toro story), and ***"The Spirit"*** story for July 20, 1941. No one was doing reprints of comic-book stories; this collection was a treasure trove for the fan who couldn't afford the comics and didn't have a prayer of seeing them collected any other way.

Also during this time, the Warren line was plunging into the comics field. ***CREEPY #1*** had already been published, and ***EERIE #1*** emerged as a companion magazine in an odd way. In order to protect the title, Jim Warren published an all-black-and-white, offset edition of the magazine, just over 5" x 7", composed of stories he already had on hand. It was published but never received any widespread newsstand distribution. It just looked like a fanzine with excellent art. In later years it (and a Warren second printing) became enough of a collector's item to inspire forgery, and, although the current ***PRICE GUIDE*** says the unauthorized reproductions are "practically worthless," they're listed at $3 to $9.

Comics publishing, indeed, caught the attention of more than one publisher looking for a profit-maker. The unfortunately short-lived Tower Comics line brought out the enjoyable ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS*** in 1965. This was a title with a line of super-heroes with which, even today, many comics writers and artists would like to work. There were Dynamo, No-Man, Menthor, and the Thunder Squad, each with novel traits and many story possibilities. Dynamo, for example, was not particularly bright but got his super powers from his Thunder Belt; in one story the belt was adapted to work by voice command, and what followed was a lovely take-off on Fawcett's Captain Marvel, with Dynamo's "Excelsior!" command taking the place of Cap's "Shazam!" The super-heroes were delightful, but the line was underfinanced and didn't make it.

Two more comics conventions occurred. The Detroit Triple Fan Fair was put on by Shel Dorf July 24-25 and Dove Kaler ran the New York Comicon II July 31-August 1 in New York City. More and more fans were getting to know each other and forming groups in which to enjoy their fanac. The fan awards for 1965 show the tastes of that year's fandom. (Results were tallied by more than one counter; Glen Johnson helped [and figured he personally handled less than one hundred ballots]. We ***think*** Derrill Rothermich did the final addition and computation. Results ran in ***THE COMIC READER #47*** in Spring 1966. As usual, there was a nominating ballot from the Executive Board of the Academy of Comic Book Fans and Collectors.)

ALLEY AWARDS FOR 1965

I. PRO CATEGORIES

1. Best Adventure Hero Comic Book: ***SPIDER-MAN*** (23.4%)
2. Best Regularly Published Fantasy Comic Book: ***STRANGE ADVENTURES*** (21.2%)
3. Best Humor Comic Book: ***HERBIE*** (24.2%)
4. Best Miscellaneous Fiction: ***SGT. FURY & HIS HOWLING COMMANDOS*** (26%)
5. Best Editor: Stan Lee (26.6%)
6. Best Writer: Stan Lee (25.8%)
7. Best Pencil Artist: Wally Wood (20.4%)
8. Best Inking Artist: Murphy Anderson (24.6%)
9. Best Comic-Book Cover: ***BRAVE & BOLD #61*** (21.7%)
10. Best Short Story: ***"The Origin of the Red Skull"*** (***TALES OF SUSPENSE #66***) (14.6%)
11. Best Giant Comic: ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS #1*** (27.1%)
12. Best Novel: ***SHOWCASE #55*** (22.4%)
13. Comic Displaying Best Color Work: ***MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER*** (25.2%)
14. Comic Most Needing Improvement: ***BLUE BEETLE*** (20.4%)
15. Best Hero: Spider-Man (14.1 %)
16. Best Supporting Character: Thing (26.4%)
17. Best Villain: Dr. Doom (25%)
18. Best Group: Fantastic Four (23.6%)
19. Best New Strip or Book: ***T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS*** (26.6%)
20. Best Revived Hero: Dr. Fate (26.6%)
21. Most Desired for Revival: Justice Society of America (25.4%)

II. Fan Categories (on a scale of 5)

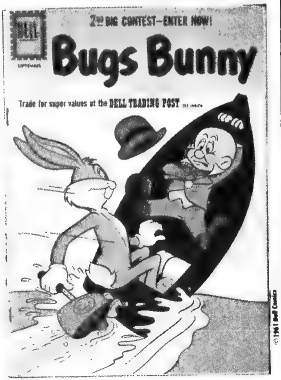
1. Best Article: ***"With Comics Down Under"*** (John Ryan) 4.51
2. Best Regular Feature: ***"On the Drawing Board"*** (Glen Johnson and Derrill Rothermich) 4.68
3. Best Fan Comic Strip: ***"The End of Bukowal"*** (***FANTASY ILLUSTRATED #3***) 4.48
4. Best Ditto/Mimeo Cover: ***BATMANIA #5*** (Biljo White) 4.38
5. Best Offset Cover: ***ALTER EGO #8*** (Biljo White) 4.57
6. Best Fan Fiction: ***"Powerman vs. The Blue Barrier"*** (George Martin) 4.29
7. Best Fan Project: New York Comicon (Dave Kaler) 4.63
8. Best Fanzine: ***ALTER EGO #8*** (Roy Thomas) 4.71

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. #1

Next Month:
"Holy Heart Attack!"

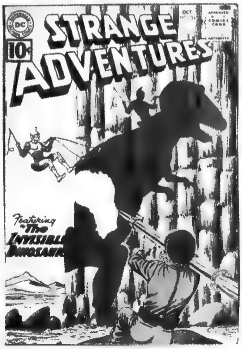
SEPTEMBER

20 Years Ago this Month



OCTOBER

20 Years Ago this Month



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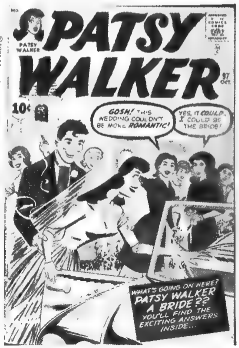
PATSY WALKER
10¢
GOSH! THIS WEDDING COULD ONLY BE MORE ROMANTIC!
YES, IT COULD IF I COULD BE THE BRIDE!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? PATSY WALKER #97 A BRIDE? YOU'LL FIND THE EXCITING ANSWERS INSIDE...

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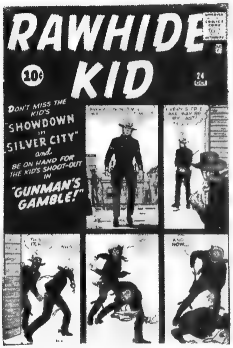


STRANGE TALES
10¢
"FIN FANG FOOM!"
THE MOST TERRIFIC MENACE OF THEM ALL!
NO PLACE ON EARTH WILL GIVE SAFETY MORTAL FROM FIN FANG FOOM THE KEE!

1961 Marvel Comics Group

Comics Feature
interviews

STEVE GERBER

conducted and introduced by Peter Sanderson

The early and middle 1970s saw a great creative surge in mainstream comic books as the best of a new generation of comics writers and artists, inspired by the artistic revolution of the Silver Age, sought to extend the potential of comics much further as a medium both 'sense of wonder' fantasy and of personal expression. Among the members of this new wave was Steve Gerber, who wrote *THE DEFENDERS*, *DAREDEVIL*, *"Guardians of the Galaxy,"* *"Lilith,"* *SON OF SATAN* and *TALES OF THE ZOMBIE*, and who co-created *OMEGA THE UNKNOWN*. Gerber is best remembered, though, for his work on two contemporary comics classics, the first series of *MAN-THING*, and his own creation, *HOWARD THE DUCK*.

To read Gerber's work is to be reminded that super-hero, supernatural and funny animal comics stories can be far more than mere rehashings of exhausted plot formulas. Gerber perceived that the fantasy elements of each genre could be used to dramatize human psychology in unusual, striking and penetrating ways. An alienated everyman figure could be portrayed as a pathetic, grotesque swamp creature whose mind was too clouded to comprehend his harsh world, but who was greatly affected, for good or ill, by the emotions of others. Alternatively, that everyman could be a grouchy duck stranded in a world he finds more absurd than himself, and adamant about preserving his integrity and sense of selfhood within it. People could take on identities and roles that might outwardly resemble those of superheroes, super-villains or other fantastic figures, but which also intriguingly mirrored their psyches. Hence an enraged father obsessed with machismo becomes a Mad Viking, or a young man thrust into the responsibilities of adulthood becomes Korrek, a warrior prince out to avenge his father. Fantasy also allowed for unusual situations that could be used to explore character. A man's inner demons could appear before him (*"Song-Cry of the Living Dead Man"* in *MAN-THING #12*) or a melancholy clown's ghost could recreate the events of his life for otherworldly judges (*#6* of the same series—*"Night of the Laughing Dead"*) or a whole issue could be spent recounting an insane but meaningful dream of Howard the Duck's that proves to be a *waauughh-purgisnacht* of the soul.

Gerber's fantasy worlds are seldom far removed from our own literally or figuratively. The colorful super-hero Omega lived in New York's aptly-named Hell's Kitchen. Man-Thing, Howard and Gerber's new creation, Stewart the Rat, cross paths with both "ordinary" people and comics-style super-villains, but we can see sides of ourselves in all of them. In story after story Gerber deals with his characters' attempts to deal with loneliness, pain, and confusion, and to achieve freedom, responsibility, and security despite the efforts of those who cannot tolerate what they cannot or will not comprehend, control or possess themselves.

At present Gerber is working as story editor for the Saturday morning animated adventure series *THUNDARR THE BARBARIAN*, which is going into its second season, and which demonstrates that Saturday morning television cartoons can be done with intelligence, humor, and respect for their audience. But Gerber has hardly abandoned comics; he continues to do work for Eclipse, and is writing a *PHANTOM-ZONE* mini-series (featuring Superman) for DC.

This interview was done in three parts. Over half of the text is from an interview Peter Gillis and I had with Gerber on Saturday, November 29, 1980 while he was in New York City for *STEWART THE RAT*'s debut at the Thanksgiving Creation Convention. I continued the interview by telephone on March 17 of this year. Finally, Gerber expanded a number of his replies to the interview questions when he edited the complete transcript.•

SANDERSON: How did you make the transition from comics to animation?

GERBER: By accident. (Laughs) No, it wasn't exactly by accident. Mark Evanier had been working in animation, as well as in live-action television, and he and I frequently discussed the field. He mentioned to me that Ruby-Spears Productions was doing ***PLASTIC MAN***, and my eyes lit up. Plas was one of those characters I'd always wanted to write, regardless of the medium or format. It was one of the first comics I'd ever seen and one I'd never lost my fondness for. So I mentioned that to Mark, on several occasions. He waged a six-month campaign on Joe Ruby, just to get me into the office to pitch a story. Finally, Joe was able and willing to see me, and I wound up with an assignment to write one fifteen-minute ***"Plastic Man"*** episode. Joe liked it. I did a second ***"Plas,"*** then went on to write four or five episodes of ***"Mighty Man and Yukk"*** —which I'd rather not discuss. It was one of those shows that was very funny conceptually—a six-inch-tall superhero teamed with the world's ugliest dog—but between the network's monkeying with the concept and the poor execution of the animation, it fell completely apart.

In any event, both Joe Ruby and the network seemed to like my work, so later, after the production season was over, I met with Joe and proposed the idea of a sword-and-sorcery series. It seemed to me a natural for Saturday morning, something that had never been done before. Joe agreed. He had a nodding acquaintance with the genre, and all the ballyhoo about the ***CONAN*** movie was making it look very viable as a direction for film and TV. So he brought me on staff, and we put together a presentation for the network for what eventually became ***THUNDARR***. I'm compressing months into sentences here.

GILLIS: Did you and Jack Kirby put together the presentation?

GERBER: Initially, it was just myself and Joe Ruby, working out the premise of the show, the character concepts, the mood and feel of the show. Then, later, Alex Toth was called in, and he designed the visuals on Thundarr, Ariel, Ookla, and Ookla's mount, the ***equart*** beast. Then, for reasons unknown to me, Alex did not continue with the project. Both Mark Evanier and I had been urging Joe Ruby to take a look at Kirby's work, which I knew, of course, would be ideal for Thundarr. Jack entered the project at that stage and began designing backgrounds, doing action shots of the characters, and this sort of thing. All of that was finally presented to the network, along with the "bible," the pilot script, and the pilot storyboard. The series sold on that basis. At that point, I was hired to story-edit the series, in addition to writing scripts and developing new properties, and that's my position with the studio now.

SANDERSON: Did Kirby do more than just these presentation action shots? Has he done storyboards?

GERBER: No. Jack doesn't do storyboards. For each episode, he designs all the new characters, props, and settings. He's the series' production designer, essentially. He's worked on virtually every episode in this capacity. You can see his distinctive style of costume design, mood, visual dynamics all over the place in that series. It wouldn't have looked nearly as good without him.

SANDERSON: Now, you said that Evanier had a hard time getting you into the office. Is that because there is some sort of prejudice against comic book writers?

GERBER: Absolutely not. That's a popular misconception on the part of people in the comics industry—that comics writers are looked down upon by producers and writers in other fields. It says a great deal more about the comics people's attitude toward themselves than about the attitudes of people outside the industry. Joe didn't see me earlier because he was, at that time, story-editing two full hours of animation scripts a week, solo. He was working with a plethora of new writers, and simply had to limit the number of new people he was talking to every week. (Laughs) It was insane, it was like a new writer every day for a couple of months, because Ruby-Spears had not yet built up a stable of regular reliable writers. In the space of a year, the studio had gone from producing thirty minutes a week to two hours, an enormous increase in workload. Joe was actively looking for new writers, but the difficulty was finding

"[PLASTIC MAN]" WAS ONE OF THOSE CHARACTERS I'D ALWAYS WANTED TO WRITE."
DO TELL!
GOOD LORD! WE'RE SURROUNDED!!
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS!
RIGHT PLAS I FOLLOW YA!
©1981 DC Comics

the time to work with someone who had never written an animation script before. Eventually, he did find the time, and I got my chance.

I can state categorically, though, that any writer interested in writing for animation, or film, or television has no reason to be ashamed of a background in comics—*if* he or she can prove his or her ability to write for those other media. The most common problem is that comics people expect to be able to make that transition without starting all over again at the very bottom, without writing a script or preparing story premises or a treatment on spec. A comics background is no liability at all; laziness and an overinflated ego, however, are deadly. I wrote my first ***"Plastic Man"*** outline with, as I recall, no assurances that I would get to script it, or that the outline would even be accepted, or that I would be paid. And I was unusually lucky. Most producers, for features or TV, won't even talk to a writer unless he has a spec script to show.

SANDERSON: What are the problems of doing animation, having come from comics?

GERBER: None specifically owing to comics. None in making the transition from medium to medium.

SANDERSON: No, I meant new things that you'd have to learn, different ways stories are told, perhaps. The fact that it's going to be on film instead of in panels.

GERBER: Well, that was not a problem for me. But I can tell you one mistake some writers make—they continue writing in panels. Forgetting that the picture moves, forgetting that the camera moves. They do a series of still shots with awkward transitions, for film, from one action to the next; they leave out the moves that happen ***between*** panels in a comic book, and the result is a very choppy film script. They also tend to forget that film works mostly in real time, that you can't deliver a paragraph of dialogue over the action of throwing a punch. That stylistic device works perfectly in comics, but not on film. All those things come very naturally to me, though. I knew them instinctively; I didn't have to learn them. What I did have to learn, or accustom myself to, was a slightly different way of structuring shots in order to tell a story in moving pictures. And that's all. For me, that aspect of it was not difficult. My first script was considered of professional quality. ***Why*** it wasn't hard, I don't know. Just something peculiar to me.

SANDERSON: Now, between ***PLASTIC MAN*** and ***THUNDARR***, apparently you were working on some Marvel properties for Saturday morning. And Daredevil, Thor, and the Marvel Dogs. And I'd like to hear about those.

GERBER: (Laughs) Bow-wow. There were no Marvel Dogs, no dog versions of the Marvel characters. That report in, I think, ***THE COMIC READER*** was totally erroneous. There ***was*** a proposal for a series that would have teamed up five or six of the Marvel heroes with a like number of dogs, more of the order of the Legion of Super-Pets, a canine auxiliary to the Avengers, except that these dogs, most of them, walked erect and talked. Amazingly, we managed to put it together without damaging the Marvel characters in any real way. I mean, there was less compromised in the portrayal of Captain America in this show than of the Thing in a show of his own, which Hanna-Barbera produced a while back.

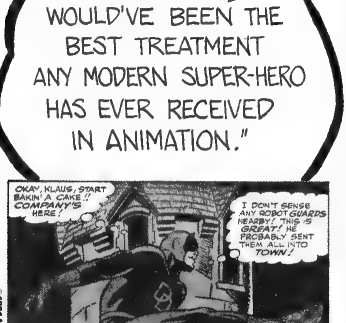
SANDERSON: Which were the Marvel characters used besides Cap?

GERBER: Thor, Black Panther, Machine Man, Scarlet Witch, Ms. Marvel, Dr. Strange—there were several different versions of the 'show, different formats. At the network's whim, we kept switching back and forth all the time.

SANDERSON: And the dogs, were they more or less like real dogs, or were they...

GILLIS: Like Muttley...?

GERBER: The dogs were generally anthropomorphic , yeah—a really bizarre bunch, more interesting than the superheroes, I thought, and much more suited to Saturday morning. There was a canine Clint Eastwood, a really funny character called Dirty Furry, whose specialty was macho overkill. There was a Jekyll-and-Hyde dog, a total berserker, kind of a purple analogue of the Hulk—that was the closest we came to a doggy version of a Marvel hero. The rest,


"[DAREDEVIL] WOULD'VE BEEN THE BEST TREATMENT ANY MODERN SUPER-HERO HAS EVER RECEIVED IN ANIMATION."
OKAY, KLAUS, START BAKIN' A CAKE !! COMPANY'S HERE!
I DON'T SENSE ANY ROBOT GUARDS NEARBY! THIS IS GREAT! HE PROBABLY SENT THEM ALL INTO TOWN!
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

I really don't recall any of them. There were so many projects that year, so many dogs—Saturday morning is obsessed with dogs for some reason. That is ***the*** animal of choice for animation.

SANDERSON: And how is it that The Avengers and company got mixed up with these dogs? What was the explanation?

GERBER: The explanation is that the networks are afraid of Saturday morning properties that are not "pre-sold." Essentially, the Marvel heroes were grafted onto this format that was already built around the dogs. Also, it happened because Marvel was willing to try almost anything to sell a show at that point. They had nothing on Saturday morning that year. So they went along with it. As you can tell from the ***THING*** series, they'll go along with just about anything.

SANDERSON: Almost any ***Thing***.

GERBER: Yes. Almost any Thing. Right. (Laughs) Oh, God! Next!

SANDERSON: And for Daredevil and Thor?

GERBER: D.D. and Thor were developed as individual shows, and stayed very, very close to the comics versions. The integrity of those characters was, you know... it galled me to work on those projects. I avoided it as long as possible. I wanted nothing to do with any of the Marvel stuff. The byline on the ***THOR*** presentation read "Fred Hemingway." The D.D. script I did under protest. Marv Postko wrote an excellent presentation piece on Daredevil, but for reasons better left unsaid, the network and Joe wanted me to write the pilot.

The only change of any import that we made in Daredevil, so help me, was that Karen Page was made a private investigator for the Murdock & Nelson law firm, to give her a more active role in the stories. Other than that, it ***was*** D.D., based on the first twenty or so issues of the book. Without question, it would've been the best treatment any modern super-hero has ever received in animation, the closest to the original conception.

SANDERSON: And I've heard Thor was based on the early issues.

GERBER: It was. Again, the only major change was that Jane Foster and Sif were made the same character, alter egos.

SANDERSON: They are now—more or less.

GERBER: In that case, ***no*** major changes were made. Incidentally, for the record, The X-Men, The Avengers, and a few more were also put into development that season, but were dropped at earlier stages. I didn't write those, or have any input on them whatsoever. I was hoping against hope that none of them would sell. I can say that with a clear conscience, because all the work I did on these projects was my best. I even got a call from Stan Lee at one point, telling me he thought the Daredevil pilot was the best Saturday morning script he'd ever read. So, because of the obligation I felt to the studio and to my own reputation, there were no half-hearted attempts... but I was very pleased when the network chose ***THUNDARR*** over both Daredevil and Spider-Man for that half-hour slot. The notion that Joe Ruby, Jack Kirby, and I could walk in with a totally original creation and win out over all these "pre-sold" items was very gratifying—not the least because of the way Jack and I were treated in the past by Marvel.

Nothing is permanent in this industry. Marvel may have six shows on the air by the time this sees print, but revenge ***was*** sweet —and ***THUNDARR*** is now a proven success. I just wanted it to have its chance.

SANDERSON: Having heard about the saga of the ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** TV show and the restrictions against the use of violence in that show, what kind of problems do you have trying to do a sword-and-sorcery show on Saturday morning?

GERBER: Unbelievable. Unbelievable problems. If I get into this, I'll get myself into trouble. (Laughs) Let me say one thing first, absolutely, that I am speaking here as an individual and ***not*** as a representative of Ruby-Spears, and my opinions do not reflect Joe Ruby's or Ken Spears' opinions, that these are strictly my own thoughts. End of disclaimer.

Standards and Practices, the network censors, has done more damage to children's television, to all children's fantasy life in general, than any other institution on the face of the earth. And they have, as co-conspirators in this destruction, the backing of groups

" THE STANDARDS AND PRACTICES CONCEPTION OF A CHILD IS... LATENTLY VIOLENT AND WILL IMITATE ANYTHING IT SEES."
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like Action for Children's Television and the National P.T.A. They are totally literal-minded, completely unschooled in the basics of dramaturgy, and, worst of all in my estimation, completely ignorant of the real workings of the minds of children. The true horror of what these groups are perpetrating is lost on most people. Society at large needs an explanation for the violence that obviously plagues our culture, and it's much more convenient to place the blame on TV than for each individual to accept the responsibility for his or her own contribution to the general climate of the times. Parents don't want to be told that they've raised their children amorally, that the schools no longer teach an objective system of values, or that murderers are back on the street after seven years, at most, in a cell—because society can't afford the expense of life imprisonment. [They'd rather] shove the blame onto television, instead. It's the same thing Wertham tried in the 1950s with comic books, except that the techniques for exerting pressure are much more sophisticated, the jargon more developed, the constituency much wider.

Given the inclinations of these people and the stupendous power they wield, it's amazing that ***THUNDARR*** is as exciting as it is. For example, the reason Thundarr carries a lightning sword—the Sunsword—rather than a broadsword is that the censors forbid us to depict any ***sharp objects*** on Saturday morning.

Basically, the Standards and Practices conception of a child is a cross between Charles Manson and a chimpanzee: it is latently violent and will imitate anything it sees. This is their opinion of children, but they could never be honest enough to state it in those terms.

SANDERSON: And children look to Saturday morning TV to teach them...

GERBER: Right. That's the corollary. Saturday morning TV is no longer entertainment, no longer fantasy—it's an instruction manual for murder. These are the steps by which you can kill your daddy, kiddies: get an anvil, drop it on his head. The ***BUGS BUNNY*** cartoons. That, when you boil it down, is the relationship the psychologists see between television and children.

The simple-mindedness of that conclusion ought to be evident to anyone, but apparently, it isn't. Or, to put it another way, the more complex theories about the effects of TV on children—and adults, for that matter—could have much more serious commercial ramifications and are maybe a little too subtle to be used as an effective tool for group mobilization. Can you imagine Peggy Charren's A.C.T. brigade, for example, marching with placards that read, "TV is Deleterious To the Attention Span and Reasoning Capacity of Children and Adults"?

My own guess is that television viewing ***itself*** past a certain point may impair a person's faculties for dealing with abstract ideas and complex problems—but the only solution to that dilemma is less programming time, which means fewer advertising dollars for the networks and stations and fewer jobs for network psychologists. It's in everyone's best interest, including the censors', to ignore these subtler questions and content themselves with imposing lunatic restrictions on the creative people.

I'm still only scratching the surface of the problem here. In its broadest context, it encompasses everything from power politics at the Federal level to pressure politics at the local level—station owners frightened for the renewal of their licenses—intramural politics at the networks, and within the pressure groups themselves, at the universities with their government grants to study the effects of televised violence, on and on. No one yet has dealt seriously with any of the real questions.

As a result, we have a barbarian who can throw a ***boulder*** at his antagonists, but can't throw a punch. He can't trip anyone. He can't do anything that Manson the Monkey could do to his little sister. Anything that is emulatable by a child cannot be depicted. The restrictions don't apply only to physical violence, either. A year ago, we weren't allowed to show fire. We did this year in ***THUNDARR***—there's a scene where the Sunsword sets an entire valley aflame—but, again, I'm astounded that they allowed us to do it. They had a similar problem with the ***F.F.*** show, with The Human Torch.

SANDERSON: In other words, Standards and Practices would not allow ***BAMBI*** to be shown on Saturday morning.

GERBER: Exactly. Not only because of the forest fire sequence, but also because characters get hurt, and Bambi's mother actually dies. There is no such thing as pain or death on Saturday morning. ***None*** of the Disney films are suitable for consumption by Manson the Monkey—except that the networks would kill to be able to put those films on the air simply because they ***are*** Disney, and the ratings would be phenomenal. Exceptions would be made very quickly, very expeditiously. The view currently held is that nobody producing animation for children today is as good as Disney, that the Disney films are classics and therefore the violence and horror and the emotions they evoke in viewers are okay.

Bullshit. Nobody now is ***allowed*** to be as good as Disney. That is the real situation. Aside from the problems of vastly more limited budgets, you also have networks and studios going out of their way to create bland, boring shows, intentionally. To appease the pressure groups and censors, who, believe it or not, actually have the last word as to what gets on the air.

I think the factor that mitigated in ***THUNDARR***'s favor is that the ratings on network television for Saturday morning had begun to drop severely. Kids were turning to the independent stations and watching the old uncut ***"Bugs Bunny"*** and ***"Porky Pig"*** and ***"Daffy Duck"*** cartoons. There isn't any comparison. And I think they finally woke up to this. They looked at the numbers, and they couldn't

lie to themselves anymore. So we were permitted a slightly greater leeway with ***THUNDARR***. Not much greater, really, but slightly.

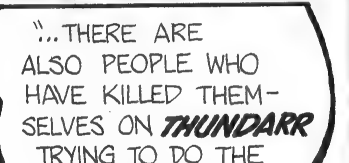
Can we leave this subject before I get blackballed from television altogether?

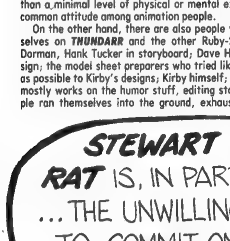
SANDERSON: It's commonly held that Saturday morning animation these days is ground out like sausage in a factory, that it's just there to fill space. People who study the old Hollywood theatrical animation feel that those people took pride in their work and put real craftsmanship into it. Do you feel this is true? Even aside from the Standards and Practices restrictions. Or do you feel the people working in animation now are underrated?

GERBER: I feel that both viewpoints have a certain validity. Let me deal with the bad side first, and then I'll come back and tell you about some of the people who work very hard in animation, especially at Ruby-Spears.

On the negative side: the first thing you hear when somebody comes to you objecting to something you've written in a script—not at the networks now, but from the artists at the studio—is, "We can't do this, it's too hard!" Meaning it requires more than the ordinary effort or thought. I don't find that unique to animation. I mean, ***STEWART THE RAT*** is, in part, about that, about the unwillingness to commit oneself to ***anything*** that requires more than a minimal level of physical or mental exertion. That's a very common attitude among animation people.

On the other hand, there are also people who have killed themselves on ***THUNDARR*** and the other Ruby-Spears projects: John Dorman, Hank Tucker in storyboard; Dave High in background design; the model sheet preparers who tried like hell to stay as close as possible to Kirby's designs; Kirby himself; and Gordon Kent, who mostly works on the humor stuff, editing storyboards. These people ran themselves into the ground, exhausted themselves completely, trying to do the damn thing ***right***. Because the series was going to be animated in Korea, we knew we had to give them as much as possible of the look, the feel of the show to get what we wanted. These people were regularly putting in twelve-hour days throughout an entire production season. And there was extreme dedication to the project. Each person had a great deal of respect for the work of the person who preceded him. Joe and I had a tremendous appreciation of Kirby's work, the storyboard people liked the scripts they were getting, the layout people liked the characters and the storyboards, and then—surprise of surprises—the Korean studio began turning out almost full animation on some of the sequences! A lot of that stuff with the horses is animated, not rotoscoped. We had rotoscoped some stock footage, and then the Koreans decided not even to use most of it, but to do original animation. It's amazing.





So, on the one hand, yes, the same kind of laziness and lack of motivation that infests every sector of American business from General Motors to Marvel Comics is also present, even prevalent, in animation. But there are also some people who work extremely hard. I didn't even mention the writers—Buzz Dixon, Mark Evanier, Marty Pasko, Ted Pedersen, Chris Vane—all of whom worked harder on this show than on anything they'd ever done in animation before.

SANDERSON: How many scripts have you yourself done?

GERBER: I collaborated with Marty Pasko on a couple. I did the pilot myself. And the last two. Five or six, I guess. I don't know exactly how many because I contributed extensively to all of them.

SANDERSON: Considering that Saturday morning animation is a less expensive medium for personal ideas than comics...

GERBER: I knew that question was coming. (Laughs)

SANDERSON: You left comics because of all the trouble you had, and now you're in animation, where you've got less...

GERBER: (Interrupting) First of all, that's a misapprehension. I left comics because Marvel terminated my contract—***two*** contracts, in fact. I was ***told*** to get out. I've never discussed this in print before, and can't in detail, because of the lawsuit, but, believe me, the record is totally unambiguous on that point.

I decided not to make the usual lateral move over to DC for a number of reasons. The pay scales in the industry were still not

commensurate with the companies' expectations of their writers and artists, and, too, I felt that I had done just about everything I wanted to do at Marvel or DC at that point—creatively, I mean. I didn't feel I could accomplish anything of special interest to me or the readers. Also I had serious doubts at that time as to whether anyone at DC then was competent to edit my particular kind of material.

I've told the story many times about how Roy Thomas was responsible for getting me into comics. It was Jack C. Harris, whom I've never even met, who got me out. Harris sent me a copy of the writers' guide he had prepared for ***TIME WARP***, this was right after I left Marvel and was doing a small amount of work for DC. The writers' guide was itself so badly written, their ideas about what they wanted in the book were so banal, the fact that they then had the gall to request "more than the usual number of rewrites, because we want to make this the best book possible"—that's a paraphrase, but it's close—with no additional payment, that was the end. I stared at that piece of paper for a day or two, then threw it out without showing it to anyone I knew out here. I was too embarrassed by it. There was no way I could go back to that. And I was having too much fun sitting here writing ***JABBERJAW*** (Laughs) for only a little bit less money. And actually, I had a lot more creative freedom. I was doing some very, very strange funny animal stories. One of these days, I'd love to see that stuff published in this country.

SANDERSON: Now, you should explain that you were writing Hanna-Barbera comics for the foreign market. You've also said that you learned more about writing comics from these than you had at Marvel or DC.

GERBER: More about the mechanics of the medium. For the simple reason that you're dealing with just the bare gears. You're right down to the pulleys and the fly-wheels, nothing else, when you're dealing with those characters. You have to tell a story in six pages, define character—although you can't develop it much—and the story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Marvel writers never get the opportunity to work with a machine that basic, that simple anymore. I think everyone could learn a lot from the experience.

"YOU HAVE TO TELL A STORY IN SIX PAGES... I THINK EVERYONE COULD LEARN A LOT FROM THE EXPERIENCE."
G. B. EM - THE STANDARD DEPARTMENT GRADE APE AND CAN NOT BE RELIED ON AT ANY TIME FOR SPARE CHANGE!
© 1983 Hanna-Barbera

Roy Thomas wrote ***PATSY AND HEDY*** and ***MILLIE THE MODEL*** for a year or two before he worked on any of the super-hero books. He was the last writer ever to do that.

SANDERSON: I think Denny [O'Neil] did, too.

GERBER: It's interesting that those are two of the best writers the medium has ever produced. They still are, at their peak form. And almost everyone who has followed them has been accused at one time or another of self-indulgence, more often than either of those two men. I don't think that's coincidental. I don't know whether Denny or Roy would credit that experience as essential in their development as comic book writers, but you have to wonder. I had the odd distinction of doing it all ass-backwards. I'd already had my career before I began to write the simpler stuff. It came as a revelation.

SANDERSON: You say you were trying some weird things in the funny animal stuff. What kind of...?

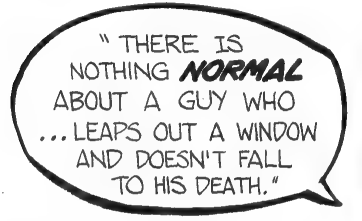
GERBER: Extremely weird. Good heavens. ***JABBERJAW*** was my favorite, a talking shark who played drums for a traveling rock and roll band in the thirtieth century. Joe Ruby and Ken Spears created the character, incidentally. In one story, their "omnicraft" lands on a planet where there's nothing but rocks, rough-hewn obelisks. They're all set to leave, convinced they've arrived on the wrong planet to play their concert gig, when the rocks start ***talking*** telepathically: "No! You are to play here! You are to play ***rock*** music!" They start to play, a little spooked but what the hell. Seventeen hours later, they're still playing, and the rocks are still swaying to the music. They try to explain that they're tired, but the rocks don't understand. Rocks don't get tired; rocks don't sleep. "Play rock music!" So Jabber does a forty-eight hour drum solo and finally works the obelisks into a frenzy, dancing the Bump. They smash each other into gravel, bumping "hips," and at last the band is free to leave the planet.

There's another one in which Jabber becomes a one-man pressure group protesting the stereotypical portrayal of sharks in the 973rd sequel to ***JAWS***. He's actually the villain in this one. He pressures the studio into recutting the film, so that, in the final scene, the giant space shark in the picture flies off toward Andromeda with a "smile" button pasted on its face, instead of attacking the space freighter. My favorite was the story that introduced Jabber's crazy mother, Sugarjaw, who invented eight ***imaginary siblings*** for Jabber—and actually talked to these non-existent children in public—and constructed a whole mythology about Jabber being the sensitive one of the brood, the object of scorn of his siblings, the artistic one. Poor Jabber, who knew his mother was out of her mind, but loved her nonetheless, had to endure this public humiliation throughout his childhood. In all honesty, this is among my personal favorites of ***all*** the comics I've ever written.

I also did ***SCOOBY-DOO***, which was the least interesting for me, because it was the least flexible of the characters. And ***HONG KONG FOOEY***, who is actually a super-hero. There were story opportunities in these characters that simply never existed in ***MARTHING*** or ***THE DEFENDERS***. It was a wonderful break from all that stuff. I'd be less than honest if I didn't say I, tired of it after awhile, but for a year or so, it was terrific fun.

Now, I'd like to go back to comics on a part-time basis. I miss it. I've wanted to do ***"Superman"***[1] since I was knee-high to George Reeves, and now that DC has settled accounts with Siegel and Shuster, I could do it with a clear conscience.' I'd like very much to do that in addition to my work back in L.A.

[1] Since the first part of this interview was conducted, Steve Gerber has indeed been asked by DC to write the Superman character. Coming this Summer is a three-part mini-series on ***THE PHANTOM ZONE***, written by Gerber, pencilled by Gene Colan, and edited by Dick Giordano.



SANDERSON: You're known at Marvel for doing these very unconventional heroes—ducks, swamp creatures—why have you always wanted to write ***"Superman,"*** who is ***the*** conventional hero?

GERBER: ***That***, not the funny animals, is a desire to return to childhood! I think I might ***approach*** the character a bit unconventionally—consistent with what's gone before, but with a few new ideas, a fresh outlook.

SANDERSON: What approach specifically?

GERBER: A lighter touch, more like the film version. Not comedic, but not as stiff as he's played at DC today. The Roy Thomas Superman-Shazam team-up, the first half of that story, comes close to what I would want to do with the character. He hasn't shown that much personality since the Weisinger years. If I were writing the character regularly, I'd want to expand on that, give him a serious side as well, explore his mental processes a bit—not in a heavy-handed way, not by suddenly making him maladjusted, but just getting at the question of how a being from another planet who is for all practical purposes impervious to harm thinks about himself and about the very fragile earth people all around him. What is it like, living with the knowledge you can crush the person sitting next to you on the bus like an eggshell if you want to? More to the point, ***do*** you ever want to? And why? Or why not? What do you fear, besides Kryptonite, if nothing on earth can harm you? Do you wonder about the outer limits of your power? Would you like to know that somewhere there is something that can overpower you? The questions inherent in that character are astonishing, in number ***and*** complexity, and they've never been explored. I would want to accomplish that within the structure of what is now called a ***"Superman"*** story, the same kind of story DC is publishing now, but with an additional layer of depth and a more realistic approach to the characters. That's all. And it will probably be the great unfulfilled ambition of my life. I doubt that DC will ever allow me within capetugging distance of Superman!

It is my curse and my blessing to bring an individual point of view to everything I write, whether it's ***HOWARD*** or ***STEWART*** or ***CAPTAIN AMERICA***, the most conventional of the Marvel titles. I probably couldn't avoid that with Superman, either, and because everybody knows that, I will probably never get to write the character.

SANDERSON: At first glance, people might say that Thundarr, too, is a conventional hero, so are you just going through the motions, or do you get involved with the character? Or is he less conventional than we might think?

GERBER: Consider the context. In terms of Saturday morning, Thundarr is just about as unconventional as possible—although the series would be very conventional for comics. I was trying to do for Saturday morning what Stan and Jack did for comics twenty years ago. I thought it was time Saturday morning caught up with that. And that's what I wanted to do with those characters. I think to that extent we may have succeeded.

Now, you asked me about going through the motions. Toward the end of the season, as fatigue set in, I did begin to feel we'd locked ourselves into too tight a format. But Joe caught it, too, and so did the network, and I think next year's shows may be a little less predictable in some ways. The challenges are inherently different with television, too, though. Episodic TV is not like a comic book, where you can assume the reader has seen the issue before. Each episode is an introduction again. And you have to go from Point A to Point B without changing the characters in between, because you can never be certain in exactly what order the episodes will be televised. This is something I find very frustrating about TV, and it's one reason—there are others—that I don't really have any desire to get involved with prime time to any great extent. Once you've mastered the craft, you really can write these scripts by rote after awhile. I suppose that's true of comics, too, though, if you're uninterested in advancing the form or developing as a writer.

SANDERSON: Well, when I say Thundarr might not be as conventional as one might think at first glance, it struck me that one of the interesting things about the show is that Thundarr is sort of brute force... Ariel is the one who is really bright and who makes jokes undercutting Thundarr's macho.

GERBER: But the basic components of the ***THUNDARR*** triad—id, ego, and superego—are Ookla, Thundarr, and Ariel respectively. Ookla is brute force. Ariel is rational, judgmental. Thundarr combines the two, but leans more to the id. It's a very classical dynamic, very familiar, and that's what seems so conventional about it. It's also McCoy, Kirk, and Spock, and Hoss, Ben, and Little Joe, all to varying degrees, of course. With these larger-than-life heroic characters, it's even more obvious.

SANDERSON: Again, though, your heroes at Marvel were mostly associated with a very unconventional mold. Even when you co-created a book about a costumed hero, the star is really the little boy (Omega and James-Michael Starling). You've got a duck, a swamp creature, you've got a zombie, even in ***THE DEFENDERS,*** you've got Dr. Strange and the Hulk, who are not all that conventional to begin with.

GERBER: Don't forget, though, I didn't make them up or team them up. That was somebody else's unconventional idea.

SANDERSON: Yes, but it would seem that you're most comfortable handling super-heroes that diverge quite a bit from the norm. What is your belief as to what makes a heroic character, what a hero should be?

GERBER: Let me depart from the question just briefly. What on earth is so sacred, what is so holy, what is so inviolable about the ***norm***? The norm is average. The norm is dullness. Let's get this straight—there is nothing ***normal*** about a guy who runs around in public in red-and-blue underwear and a cape, and leaps out a window and doesn't fall to his death. There is ***nothing*** normal about that! There is nothing normal about a man who puts on a horned cowl and a utility belt and rides around in the dead of night in an automobile shaped like a bat, avenging crime with no authority from the law. There is nothing normal about ***any*** of these characters! Normal people and normal events are utterly forgettable. It's that simple. If it were otherwise, every super-hero would be wear-

ing a pin-striped suit and a tie and Florsheims, and have every hair in place—no spit-curls, folks—and would do nothing out of the ordinary for seventeen pages every month! These characters proceed from the premise that the norm is not interesting. It's ***only*** deviation from the norm that is of any literary or dramatic interest. What I tried to do in a lot of my work was to portray the real, normal world side-by-side with these freakish characters, especially in ***OMEGA*** and ***HOWARD***. That's what people found so disturbing about those books, whether they're aware of it or not. The norm was present to be shattered by the appearance of these bizarre characters. You rarely see the real world in these books anymore. It's all sort of a Marvel version of Middle Earth, where everything is strange, which, by some strange process, actually has a calmative effect on the reader. You can't be discamfited by the sudden appearance of a character in a strange costume when ***everybody*** wears a strange costume. In striving to make the books "visually interesting," they've actually accomplished the opposite, a muting effect. Okay. Now to answer your question... (Laughs)

I think the characteristics of a hero are constant and universal. I don't think they change. A hero is a character with an ideal he probably feels is worth dying for. A hero is a character who takes risks. A hero is a character who is willing to lay his own life, or something he treasures, on the line, either for what he believes, or to protect another, or both. He is capable of uncomplaining sacrifice. These characteristics describe most of the mythological heroes, and they are true even of a character like Superman. The difference between Ulysses and Superman, though, is that Ulysses didn't have to worry about ***ODYSSEY-II***, or whatever, next month's issue.

SANDERSON: Well, in a sense, Hercules did.

GERBER: Uh-huh. Also, Hercules died at the end. And horribly. These characters had flaws. They were susceptible to all the same temptations as every other human. One of the most monumental mistakes made by the creators of comics is to assume that a hero can have none of those imperfections. That's been DC's problem almost since its inception. Marvel is moving in the same direction. Their heroes can never do anything unheroic. Marty Pasko put this in a very interesting way: the reason a saint is saintly is that he ***resists*** temptation, not that he never ***feels*** it. Christ was tempted at one point to abandon his faith! If Christ can be tempted, Superman can be tempted. Okay? And Captain America can know fear, and Reed Richards can have a momentary failure of nerve. To deny them that is to deny the entire basis of their heroism—the ability to ***conquer*** the temptation and fight on, and maybe not even to a happy ending. The danger, the threat to life and limb must be felt by the reader ***and*** the hero. A hero is ***not*** a person who feels no fear—that's an idiot. A hero ***overcomes*** the fear, the pain, the jitters, the whatever and still behaves heroically. ***That's*** what a hero is. By that definition, incidentally, most of the comics heroes aren't heroes at all. They're costumed bullies.

I suppose that, to me, a hero is most interesting, not at his weakest, necessarily, but when he's being tested most severely. I don't think that's a particularly radical concept, either. If you're dealing with super characters, it seems to me that the obstacles they overcome ought to be more challenging than a bigger lightning bolt thrown from the palm, bigger than last month's lightning bolt, I mean. The danger and the obstacles have to take on much greater proportions. To me, at least, the most horrifying prospect of all is being a disembodied brain [as was done with Nighthawk in ***THE DEFENDERS #31***]. My God! Losing all control of your own destiny, being trapped with nothing but your own thoughts. It's worse than being paralyzed. No outside stimuli whatsoever! I can't think of a more horrific state that that—except possibly that of The Zombie, which runs a very close second.

SANDERSON: Well, it's sort of the ultimate extension of the—to coin a phrase—"Trapped in a world he never made" theme... a world that you never made that tries to control you, but you can't affect it.

GERBER: Is the mind a world you never made? Or is the mind a world ***totally*** constructed by you?

THEN--IF I FIND OUT THAT IT'S ONE OF LUTHOR'S BOMBS THAT SHATTERED THIS DAM--ENDANGERING HUNDREDS OF LIVES--!
--HEAVEN HELP HIM WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON HIM!
©1981 DC Comics

"IF CHRIST CAN BE TEMPTED, SUPERMAN CAN BE TEMPTED."

SANDERSON: No, I mean the total helplessness. You cannot affect anything. Anything can affect you.

GERBER: Don't forget, there were other things going on in that series: the poor villain, trapped in the brain of that stupid deer.

SANDERSON: And the one walking around with the gorilla body.

GERBER: That whole series is one of my personal favorites, of all the work I did at Marvel. I really enjoyed the combination of the completely off-the-wall humor with the genuinely terrifying and the heroic aspects of the story. To me, for the heroes to triumph over a situation like that is much more interesting that beating another super-villain who happens to be stronger than the one from last month. You can keep building and building on that idea, making the villains stronger and stronger, and never create an original story. What's the point of writing or reading that kind of crap?

SANDERSON: Interesting. Would you like to comment on what has been referred to as your proclivity for rather odd mother figures in your different series—Rose, Ruth Hart, even Beverly?

GERBER: Odd mother figures? ***My*** women characters? Okay, maybe. Let me try and deal with the business of the mother figures in my books. There's no argument that Ruth and Amber in ***OMEGA*** were maternal figures to James-Michael. They actually were his guardians, in fact. But the two characters have to be differentiated somewhat. Ruth was the protector, the nurturer, or tried to be. Amber was more of a mentor, a teacher for James-Michael. Her entire attitude was based on the idea that "the punk" had to learn to fend for himself. She may have been a maternal figure, but she was not very motherly.

In ***HOWARD THE DUCK***, and particularly in ***STEWART THE RAT***, I think the relationships are altogether different, from each other and ***OMEGA***.

Taking each case separately: Howard and Beverly were equals. No question about that. Howard didn't need or want mothering. Whatever maternal feelings Howard evoked in Bev were the same that a human boyfriend would have brought out. Howard and Bev traded banter and shared emotions and thoughts totally as equals. Howard provided a kind of defense for Beverly against the outside world, for whatever reasons. I never delved into that very deeply

(and I never wanted to), but you can imagine that if her past was filled with former lovers on the order of Dr. Bong (Laughs) there may have been justification for her needing a defense mechanism of some kind. Beverly provided precisely the opposite function for Howard. She was his ingress into the world of hairless apes. He seemed much less threatening and less alien when seen beside this outwardly normal, seemingly conventional young woman.

There's a really lovely encapsulation of this in a two-panel sequence I did for the newspaper strip, as a header for the Sunday page. Howard and Bev are walking through a park at night, and they pass two kids necking on a park bench. Bev looks sort of yearningly at the couple, but she and Howard walk on, and the caption says something about there being "other ways of loving." They stop at their own park bench, and Bev and Howard shake hands. "How 'bout this?" Bev asks. "I won't tell you *my* secret sorrow if you don't tell me *yours*." And Howard answers, "It's a deal." For me, that said everything that needed to be said about their relationship. The two of them transcended all the sexual hang-ups and the mundane *Angst* of most human relationships. They got past it. The rest of the world was another problem entirely, something the two of them would deal with together—or fail to deal with, as the case may be. As you know, they weren't exactly immune to differences of opinion.

In ***STEWART THE RAT***, we have a totally different kind of situation. Rose Lake is Sonja's mother, and she's definitely a mother-figure for Stewart. But Stewart and Sonja, again, are more or less equals—or maybe more like older sister and kid brother. Sonja is kind of Stewart's tour guide. And Stewart is a very, very different character from Howard. He wouldn't need the ingress to the human world that Bev provided for Howard, or any special protection, once he'd fully matured. Stewart would find his own way. He'd burrow in, he'd nibble in, he'd chew his way in, he'd do anything necessary to get where he wanted to be.

SANDERSON: Well, I don't know. At the beginning, when he walks into the restaurant, and he gets stabbed, it seems when he finds Rose, and then Sonja, he has gotten himself a family. Now he's got security, and he can explore the world. He needed those people as a core, a base.

GERBER: The thing you're ignoring is that, first of all, he chewed his way out of the laboratory, survived six months alone in the desert, walked into the diner of his own volition. I think—assuming he didn't bleed to death on the floor (Laughs)—had he not found Rose or Sonja, it may have taken longer, it may have taken a different form, but he *would* have found his way into that society if he had wanted to, one way or another. Rose happened to be there, which was fortunate.

SANDERSON: Whereas Howard would have just gone ahead and committed suicide?

GERBER: Maybe. I don't know. He may have been bluffing in those opening pages of the first issue, he may not. He might have wound up back in the lunatic asylum, just because his own thoughts about his dilemma might have driven him crazy. I don't think Howard was ever quite able to muster the motivating force that is so much a part of Stewart. They're two completely different personality types.

SANDERSON: How would you encapsulate this difference, then, if you can? Stewart seems much more positive in his outlook than Howard.

GERBER: He is.

SANDERSON: Howard is a misanthrope?

GERBER: Not exactly a misanthrope, but extremely cynical, very jaded. You get the feeling he's seen it all, and he doesn't want to look at it a second time. Howard is also much more verbal, more facile and glib than Stewart would ever be. Howard sees a situation, sizes it up instantly, summarizes it in a pithy remark, and then walks away from it—unless it drags him back in. Howard didn't exactly do one-liners. He didn't do jokes, but he had a facility for instant appraisal of another character or event. Stewart is a little slower to arrive at those conclusions. He examines things a little more carefully and tries to see things from more angles than Howard did. Howard was quick; Stewart is thorough.

SANDERSON: Anyway, whereas Howard and Beverly have this strong affection, I was very struck by the final page of ***STEWART*** in which the two of them, Sonja and Stewart, almost make this connection, it seems, saying what they feel for each other. Sonja tries, but it seems she can't quite phrase it.

GERBER: Sonja says exactly what she means.

SANDERSON: Oh? But it isn't coming right out and saying "thank you."

GERBER: Earlier in the book, she thanks him for rescuing her from the Dope Fairy.

SANDERSON: But it seems to change at the end. She says it in a much less direct way, and he doesn't say "you're welcome," or anything, he just sort of shrugs it off, and they go back to making jokes about what to do next.

GERBER: It's a different relationship from Howard and Beverly's. On that last page, Sonja is probably making the first personal, revelatory statement, the first bit of self-exposure in the entire book. That's the importance of those two panels, not *what* she said but the fact that she said it at all, and her awkwardness at expressing it. That says volumes about her character, much more than the words themselves.

I CAUGHT THE MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCE VERY CLASSY
I LIKE A BIT WITH CULTURE
AND I LIKE A WOMAN OF HER WORD WHERE'S CHOW?
© 1990 Steve Gerber

"[STEWART] WOULD HAVE FOUND HIS WAY INTO THAT SOCIETY. ROSE HAPPENED TO BE THERE."

SANDERSON: Because earlier, she, as her mother says, prefers to bury her sorrows by drinking and swearing?

GERBER: No, no. Her mother doesn't say that. I disagree with you about that. She doesn't bury her sorrows, she just doesn't parade them around. I think in terms of comic book characters in the past twenty years, this may be unique. Most characters nowadays are either very well-adjusted or whiners. Sonja is neither. She has her difficulties, but she doesn't talk about them a lot, and she doesn't look to other people to help her solve them. She's not a complainer. It's not in her makeup to prattle on endlessly about her personal problems. So when she does actually reveal that small bit of personal information to Stewart, that, to me, is the

real beginning of their relationship. At that point, he becomes more than a casual acquaintance and an employee. But he *doesn't* become what the duck was to Beverly. If we ever do a sequel to ***STEWART***, I have absolutely no intention of developing their relationship along the lines of Howard and Beverly.

SANDERSON: Not a romance at all, just close friendship.

GERBER: Peter, I don't even know what a "romance" *is*. Romeo and Juliet, I guess. Or Wanda and The Vision, or something. Howard and Beverly was *not* a romance. Stewart and Sonja is even less so. We live in a world where romance comes packaged like corn flakes by ***SILHOUETTE*** and ***HARLEQUIN***, where its components are determined by marketing surveys. Romance is a commodity now. Howard and Beverly, at least as I wrote them, and Stewart and Sonja had both a little more dignity and a little more quirkiness than that... and a great deal more complexity. The terms we're using here are the ones I'd expect to hear from some simpleton at Marvel. We should both be ashamed of ourselves. The relationships in question are unique unto themselves, just as all four of the characters are.

SANDERSON: When I look at the "Stewart Dropp" sections in ***STEWART*** and the ***"Howard the Human"*** story, the characters seem much better off when they're "funny animals" than when they're human beings. What does being a funny animal mean to you?

GERBER: (Laughs)

SANDERSON: I mean, Howard the Human, really, he is so depressing. In that story, you have Howard the Duck's image talking to the human Howard, who is just sort of going around passively feeling sorry for himself. What does it mean to be a funny animal? What makes them have better personalities?

GERBER: In terms of the comic book medium, or...

SANDERSON: I don't know, in terms of the stories. When they're humans they seem less alive than when they're rats and ducks.

GERBER: Howard as a human being really behaved no differently than Howard the Duck would have. Disoriented a bit by the metamorphosis, sure, but otherwise the same. That was a very interesting challenge in doing that story. You'd assume at first that Howard would be overjoyed by the change. Now he could melt into the crowd and never have to hear "you're a duck!" again as long as he lived. But as the story hopefully pointed out, Howard could never become part of the furniture. Even as a human being, he was still a duck! (Laughs) That part of his personality wouldn't go away. It's there, pulling his hair, kicking him in the shins, even hitting him over the head with a skillet. It's telling him, "No! The camouflage won't work! You can't be this person! You are going to be the duck, no matter what you look like, no matter what you say..."

SANDERSON: Which means you are not going to be like anyone else, you are going to be somewhat subversive of the social order.

GERBER: It means you are going to be an individual. There is no way you can change that. Whether you have feathers or skin on the outside, you're the same personality within, with all the same flaws, all the same virtues, all the same quirks—or quacks, I guess.

SANDERSON: And what does it mean to be a rat on the outside rather than a rat on the inside?

GERBER: Uh-uh. Stewart is a rat through and through. Absolutely. He has all the instincts and behavior patterns...

SANDERSON: Well, he's nicer and saner than he was as a human.

GERBER: First of all, Stewart the Rat never *was* a human being. He carries the genes of a dead man, but he's not Stewart Dropp reincarnated. He's closer to Dropp's *child*, but he's also the offspring of a rat. Moreover, I think you may be drawing some untoward conclusions about rats. They are not inherently vicious animals. My daughter used to have one as a pet. It was named "Baby," and it would sit on her head and drape its tail over her nose. A sweet little animal, really.

SANDERSON: Well, it struck me that sometimes he acts like the kind of rat children are afraid of, when he attacks the villains, but other times, he's like a cute little laboratory rat.

GERBER: He *was* a laboratory rat. Or his gene donor was. But if that rat had escaped the lab and run off into the wild, it would shortly have become the same kind of animal that typically infests the gutters, the streets, the sewers.

Stewart, though, also has this human component. His brain capacity alone would dictate a different kind of behavior, a different reaction to the wild environment from an ordinary rat. But he has in common with his rodent relations a certainty that he can survive adversity. That makes him a much more self-assured, more assertive, less bitchy character than Howard was. For one thing, Stewart knows that he'll never go hungry. A rat can eat almost anything. I did quite a bit of research on this. Anything! Wood, metal. They can chew through a lead pipe.

SANDERSON: And actually digest it?

GERBER: Well, send it through the tract, anyway. They're almost omnivorous. It's still a struggle for them to survive, but if you know, for example, that you can't eat that desk... (Laughs) if all else fails... there must be a certain kind of confidence that comes from that ability that the duck could not feel. You asked me what does it mean to be a rat on the outside...

SANDERSON: Let's put it a different way. Stewart Dropp had these very severe emotional problems and came to a very sad end and caused someone else to come to a very sad end. Whereas Stewart the Rat seems to be a much saner, more positive, more likeable character—but now he's an animal.

GILLIS: He's part human, also.

SANDERSON: He's an animal still, and it seems as if to become a funny animal is somehow to gain innocence. It's a transformation for the better, to go from being wholly human to a half-human, half-rat somehow.

GERBER: Personally, I think it's because Gene Colan draws cute rats and ducks that you're reacting this way. You've been conditioned by Disney and Hanna-Barbera to see these creatures as cuddly and cute and innocent.

SANDERSON: Could you solve a long-time mystery for me...

GERBER: What? How do you pronounce "W-a-a-u-g-h"?

SANDERSON: Beyond that. Does Howard's voice sound like a duck's, or like a person's? Does he sound more like Daffy or Donald?

GERBER: Of those two, more like Daffy. But really more like Burgess Meredith doing the Penguin.

SANDERSON: Hey!

GERBER: All right?

"I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT A ROMANCE IS."
BUT THEN... THERE ARE OTHER WAYS OF LOVING.
HOW 'BOUT THIS: I WON'T TELL YOU MY SECRET SORROWS IF YOU KEEP MUM ABOUT YOURS!
DEAL!
©1981 Marvel Comics Group

"[HOWARD SOUNDS LIKE] BURGESS MEREDITH DOING THE PENGUIN..."
"A VERY CYNICAL, SARCASTIC TONE."
© 1981 DC Comics
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• ***SANDERSON:*** All right! Grouchy quacking!

GERBER: Something like that, with an edge to it, a very cynical, sarcastic tone, but a wider range of emotion. Wiseass.

SANDERSON: In a recent interview, Jim Shooter talked about the "Duckworld" story, which had a Richard Nixon analogue, a Kent State analogue, and he said that it was a bad story because Mantlo came down on one side of an issue. Against the shootings. And he said, "True social satire makes fun of both sides." And the reason the story about Le Beaver was good, he said, is that no one knew whether you were making fun of Canadian separatists or were on their side. So my question to you is, is this the true definition of satire, that you make fun of both sides, or do you come down on one side or another?

GERBER: Satire without a point of view is not satire! I read that interview with Shooter, and my jaw dropped at that comment. If he really thought that what I was doing was equivocating, straddling the fence in all cases, he's badly mistaken.

For that matter, the ***"Le Beaver"*** story wasn't even about French separatism in Canada. Canadians certainly understood that! It was about the genuine fear on the part of many Canadians that the U.S. will one day cross the border militarily and attempt to annex Canada for its resources. It was about Canadian ***nationalism***, the identity crisis that country has to deal with because it does share almost everything except a government with the United States. They ***want*** a national identity, but they almost have to construct it artificially, like cities in the U.S. construct their civic pride campaigns, because all of Canada's major cities are along the U.S. border, and the Canadians get everything from our television programs to our McDonald's hamburgers. It's not really a separate culture. Canadians and Americans differ about as much as people from Akron and people from Dayton.

Frankly, I sympathize with the Canadians. I don't think it's impossible that our gluttony for natural resources might eventually bring the two nations into conflict and that Canada may one day pay the price for being much more sensible that her slightly bloated neighbor to the south.

The reason for Le Beaver's weird speech pattern, incidentally, ***does*** have to do with the French Canadian militancy. It's now law that all packages, street signs, signs in all public places must be printed in French ***and*** English in Canada. My original idea was to have Le Beaver say everything ***twice***—two balloons, one in English, one in French, as a parody of that system. Space and time—since I'm nowhere near proficient enough in French to do the translations myself—were prohibitive. So I settled for the thing where every other word was French.

It was ***not*** an attempt to take both sides of an issue—though I did occasionally indicate, when I myself believed it, that more than one side of an issue might have merit and that choosing a side could be difficult. That was the case with Sudd, the living soap bubble, wiping out the prostitutes and drug peddlers on Eighth Avenue. Howard had to hesitate for a moment before making the decision to stop Sudd. Eventually, Howard decides that rampant slaughter is less preferable than rampant prostitution or pornography or whatever—but that, too, entailed a value judgment. It was pointing out that the forces of "decency" can also go berserk.

Both of those stories, all the Duck stories, everything I write—and it's not even a voluntary thing—has a point of view. I've never tried to hide it, and I've never tried to please, or offend, everybody.

The fact, of course, is that you can't make ***any*** statement of opinion without offending ***somebody***, somewhere, even if that statement is an all-encompassing generalization. There are some examples on television of attempting to do satire without a point of view. And they bomb, invariably, because there's nothing remotely funny about them. Satire points out uncomfortable truths, and in doing so, it both amuses and offends. Inevitably.

And, by the way, there ***is*** a difference between satire and propaganda. The satirist is never wedded to a dogma. He's ***free*** to criticize all sides if he feels like it. Or not to, if he doesn't.

End of dissertation.

SANDERSON: It seems you are very, very concerned with the state of helplessness in childhood and how it affects one for life.

GERBER: Children are not as helpless as we like to think. They're smaller and know less about the ways of the world, but they're very resourceful and very imaginative—at least they were, before we launched the campaign to process fantasy out of childhood.

Anyway, what one experiences in childhood, what one is taught and how one processes those lessons through one's own individual mental faculties—that has to have a great deal to do with the shape of the adult. That's not exactly a revolutionary concept. Why shouldn't it be as true for Captain America or the Mandrill as for any of Freud's patients?

SANDERSON: With that Captain America story, I was surprised to discover that Cap as a young boy was an artist. And that's the one feature of your Captain America origin story that's been kept.

GERBER: Is that right?

SANDERSON: So how did you set about the task of constructing his life before the great experiment that produced Captain America?

GERBER: With that series, I felt a pressing need to keep everything very simple, very clear, like the character of Cap. For a number of reasons. The book had a generally younger readership than many of the other Marvel titles, but also simplicity is the soul of Captain America. Even as a reader I felt that way. The more involved a story became in that book, the less it sounded like Captain America. Superman, again, is very much the same way. The concept is so pure that you constantly have to be on guard for anything that clutters it, obscures it, needlessly complicates it. You can do very ***complex*** things with the characters, but not ***complicated*** things. That's why Sal Buscema was by far one of the best possible choices to draw the book.

Sal is a storyteller, not a stylist. And he doesn't try to be ***self-consciously*** simple, as, for example, C.C. Beck did with the ***SHAZAM*** revival.

Anyway, I wanted something that was both consistent with the character and utterly unexpected—and something that would be instantly understandable without a lot of ambiguity. It became a

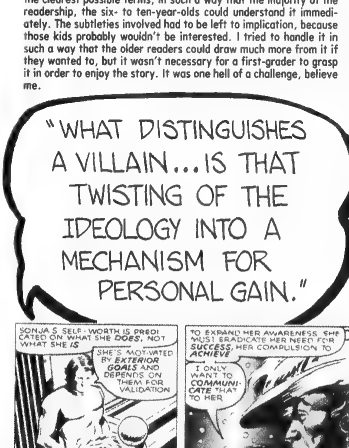
matter of simple inductive logic. The young Steve Rogers, bony, scrawny, frail, would have been as much a psychological opposite of Captain America as he was a physical opposite. And he *had* to be, actually, for the reader to have any sympathy with him. Nobody loves a jingoist with a 4-F draft classification. It's easy to be patriotic if you know you'll never be called upon to fight.

Anyway, it occurred to me that this character was really very different from what many people at Marvel, and at Universal, too, judging from their casting—it occurred to me that Cap was not, as generally supposed, the All-American football lineman type. The character never really behaved that way. Cap was someone with a far different sensibility, a guy whose favorite phrase would never be "go for it!" or something. (Laughs) The compassion the character displayed had to come from someplace.

SANDERSON: And the thoughtfulness.

GERBER: And, strangely enough, his attention to detail, the characteristic that made him a formidable espionage agent as well as a commando type. This was a character who noticed everything and drew conclusions from adding up the details in a manner not unlike The Batman. Cap is less the detective, but there was still this unexplainable aspect of his personality. He is a spy. And in many ways, so is an artist—a peeping tom, an eavesdropper, and a hostile or compassionate interpreter. That's where it come from.

The important thing, though, for me, was to execute this idea in the clearest possible terms, in such a way that the majority of the readership, the six- to ten-year-olds could understand it immediately. The subtleties involved had to be left to implication, because those kids probably wouldn't be interested. I tried to handle it in such a way that the older readers could draw much more from it if they wanted to, but it wasn't necessary for a first-grader to grasp it in order to enjoy the story. It was one hell of a challenge, believe me.


"WHAT DISTINGUISHES A VILLAIN...IS THAT TWISTING OF THE IDEOLOGY INTO A MECHANISM FOR PERSONAL GAIN."
SONJA'S SELF-WORTH IS PREDICATED ON WHAT SHE DOES, NOT WHAT SHE IS
SHE'S MOTIVATED BY EXTERIOR GOALS AND DEPENDS ON THEM FOR VALIDATION
TO EXPAND HER AWARENESS SHE MUST ERADICATE HER NEED FOR SUCCESS. HER COMPULSION TO ACHIEVE
I ONLY WANT TO COMMUNICATE THAT TO HER.
WHO YOU SMITTIN' DOC?
1988 Steve Gerber

SANDERSON: In ***STEWART***, you definitely take a strong stand against what your villain, Dr. Wayne Fossick, represents. And, one might say, to go back to an earlier topic, someone like Dr. Bong shows you are not all that interested in the typical world-conquering villain. What makes a villain for you? What do you conceive of as a villain? It seems as that Fossick incarnates exactly everything you condemn.

GERBER: Fossick, though, *is* a world-conquering villain. This is the thing people don't seem to understand.

SANDERSON: He's got an ideology besides just grabbing power?

GERBER: Very few ***real*** villains actually do make a visible, physical grab for power. They try to attain it, like Fossick, through means that look legitimate. And most villains—Hitler, Nixon, the whole gamut—do have an ideology of some sort. What distinguishes a villain from an ordinary ideologue, I suppose, is the twisting of the ideology into a mechanism for personal gain. Not necessarily wealth. It could be any of the basic Seven Deadlies. And the ideology need not be a political or social cause; it can be a personal rationalization. Also, villains never see ***themselves*** as villains. And the worst villain of all is the one who thinks he is morally correct. There is no one more dangerous than that. Finally, a villain has no qualms about subjecting other people to conditions that he himself would not tolerate. Whether that's as simple as capturing them and tossing them in a dungeon, or murdering them, or inflicting psychological damage upon them as Fossick does, is almost immaterial. That is, almost, the definition of a villain.

SANDERSON: Would you, then, put Fossick in the same class as, say, Doctor Doom, a world-conquering villain?

GERBER: Yes, but look at the ***manner*** in which he's conquering the world. He only has to resort to physical force against Sonja, who was a genuine individual. Everybody else at the Fastness was a willing victim.

The point of the story, or one of them, is that, no matter what anybody tells you, you are in this world alone. And you have to deal with it on your own, with your own resources. And that caring and sharing—those buzzwords again (I'm using them facetiously here)—have to be ***earned***. And all the support systems that have been constructed by government, by society, by these well-meaning groups with telephone hotlines for every conceivable human difficulty from rape to hemorrhoids—they're really not going to help you. The essential strength that you need to survive—no, "survival" is another buzzword and a pretty shallow objective, if you think about it—to surmount the problems in this world, that strength has to come ***from within***.

Now that sounds like a statement that Fossick would make, but it isn't at all. The Fastness *is* one of those support systems, where everybody's weakness is validated and made okay by the weakness of all the others. Fossick says you ***are*** the universe, the universe is you. It's a gross perversion of the other statement.

SANDERSON: How does that justify the fate Stewart hands out to him? Or if it does justify it, why does it have to be that graphically portrayed? Why does it have to take that particular form?

GERBER: Because many people reading the book might otherwise think that the point of the story was that people should love and care for each other. Is that a strange answer?

SANDERSON: And the point of the story is that people who try to harm other people should be treated equally badly in return?

GERBER: At the risk of sounding like the Ayatollah Gerber...has everybody forgotten that Fossick murdered outright at least five people? That he preyed on the weakness of every one of the implements in the noog pool to, in effect, con them out of their life essences? That his Witnesses, the Fastness clients who returned to society, exist to make life miserable for anyone who *is* capable and *is* self-sufficient in the ***genuine*** sense of the term? For that matter, Fossick was ready, willing, and unquestionably able to kill Stewart. Stewart was dying in the noog pool during that final confrontation. If he had tried to climb out, Fossick would've grabbed his tail and yanked him back in. Fossick was willing to wreck Sonja's life and career, and he was willing to subject his Fastness clientele to an interminable series of lies about themselves, about the world, about him...

SANDERSON: Which might very well have ended in their deaths or insanity, as seen. And he's obviously well on his way to spreading his message through California, at least.

GERBER: It's not really alienation Fossick is propagating—it's ***in-sulation***, protective shielding for a personality, his ***own***, that is too weak to confront itself honestly. But Fossick, really, is too intelligent to swallow that premise whole. To justify it, the whole world, or at least ***his*** whole world, has to operate on the same assumptions. So he surrounds himself with these other, even weaker and less intelligent types and inoctrinates them, and their adulation, their ***approval*** of him becomes the validation he needs. His only problem then is Sonja, who still stands as a two-legged contradiction of everything he needs to believe. She has to be converted or eliminated.

Fossick, like most of the "caring and sharing" types, really isn't very interested, you see, in "helping others," to use the buzzword. He's interested in shielding ***himself*** by creating this non-judgmental, self-absorbed, value-neutral environment. If nobody judges anybody, obviously ***he*** can't be judged either. He'll never have to hear the truth about himself.

SANDERSON: That's what I mean. You don't need relationships, all you need is yourself.

GILLIS: The Anti-Life Equation, in a sense.

GERBER: Sure. Boy, is that a nice turn of phrase, the Anti-Life Equation. Thanks, Jork.

You know, when you think about it, one of the most realistic, though one of the most comical, origins of a super-villain is probably the Lex Luthor story.

SANDERSON: Oh, yes!

GERBER: "You stole my hair! You ruined my looks! I hate you, Superboy!" (Laughter) We're laughing, but that probably ***could*** drive the right kind of personality over the brink and create a life-long enmity. And given the scientific genius of the kid and later the man, it all becomes almost perfectly plausible. You progress from anger over the fact that Lana Lang won't go to the prom with Kid Baldy, to building machines the size of Macy's that move down the street ripping buildings apart and trying to kill Superman. Why not?

Unfortunately, it's silly for two reasons, also. It hinges on one event rather than a complex series of events. And it's just a little too convenient that Superman and Luthor were boyhood acquaintances. It cheapens the Luthor character in some ways I can't quite define when you know he's carried this lunatic grudge for that long and that there actually is a personal, rather than a, what, professional (?) basis for the feud.

Still, Luthor, of all the early characters is probably the most realistically motivated. Doom is another one. The disfiguration of the face. It's not as funny as Luthor, but it's almost the identical origin story, handled a bit more convincingly. Stan and Jack were very smart. They were able to make Reed and Victor not only acquaintances but ***roommates*** and still never permit them to become ***friends***. And Doom causes his own disfigurement, though he manages to blame it on Reed, on the school administration—on everybody!

SANDERSON: It came as a surprise to me, at first, that Stewart stands up for some very traditional values, like hard work, striving for a goal, good personal relationships, exchange of warmth. And Fossick has created this ideology that justifies failure, not working, not relating to people. It justifies being alienated and liking it.

GERBER: By not admitting to the alienation. It goes even further than that, though. Fossick's system is constructed so as not to subject ***him*** to criticism that he finds uncomfortable. If you take exception to anything he says or does, you're "making a judgment," which is considered in and of itself to be something "negative."

The man was a monster. That's made clear by everything else in the story. More than that, he's also ***self***-destructive! Why would he bother with the revenge on Sonja at all, if that's not true? He didn't just fail at his ambitions. It's made abundantly clear that he ***chose***, in a way, to fail. That he stacked the deck

IT'S BETTER FOR MAN TO IDENTIFY WITH WEAKNESS. IT GIVES HIM A HUMBLE, TRUER PERSPECTIVE OF MAN.
YEAH. THIS RAT RACE OF ALWAYS PROVING YOURSELF IS INSANE! IT SEEMS OUR BIGGEST EFFICIENCY DOESN'T AGREE!
YOU WANT TO PULL A VICIOUS SWITCH! YOU SWEAR THE BEST AS LONGEVITY SO YOU HAVE AN EXCUSE TO REMAIN AS LOUSY AS YOU ARE!
1983 Charlton Comics

"...IF NOBODY JUDGES ANYBODY, OBVIOUSLY ***HE*** [FOSSICK] CAN'T BE JUDGED EITHER."

against himself, and then refused to take responsibility for it.

I can't help but wonder if the people who don't understand the book aren't coming to it with some of Fossick's own preconceptions. It's certainly a common enough view these days, that what's wrong with us as individuals is the fault of society, and not ourselves.

What that means is this: we have learned to psychologize and rationalize the actions of others and ourselves to a sufficient degree that we're now able to forgive almost anything. It's the value-neutral culture at work again, and I can't help but think it's gone far enough... and that the first people who probably need to be punished are the people who fed us those lies. Now, even that is probably going too far, because it's characterizing the book, ***STEWART***, as a political statement, which it wasn't meant to be. It was, in fact, a purely personal statement. I'll tell you something I've only admitted to one other person: that the character of Fossick was drawn from some of the worst, most hideous aspects of my own personality. Things that I find myself having to fight all the time, personal weaknesses and proclivities that have nothing at all to do with politics or society, but which ***could*** find support and encouragement from some sectors if I let them, if I didn't recognize the essential disaster of giving in to them. Self-pity. Self-absorption. I'm prone to all that, maybe more than a lot of people. But I fight it, all the time. And I don't like it or condone it in myself when those tendencies get the upper hand over the more useful, productive sides of my personality. Fossick's bill of goods is that, in weakness there is strength. And it's true to a certain extent. Weakness, ineptitude, incapacity can be tremendously effective weapons, manipulative devices. But that doesn't change their essential nature.

I would like to be able to deal with those inadequacies the same way Stewart deals with Fossick, so there's a little bit of wish-fulfillment in that sequence, as well as the symbolism of the encounter-group villain finally spilling his guts, so to speak—but that's all it is. Symbolic. You can't really deal with those demons that way.

SANDERSON: There is a cry out for capital punishment for people who don't manage to fight those tendencies.

GERBER: You mean the people like Fossick?

GERBER: You mean line the shrinks up against the wall and shoot 'em? No, no!

But I'm not sure I'm against capital punishment in general. And I'll tell you why: I think one devalues his own life by saying that a murderer should not have to pay with his. Forgive me, Yoko, but John Lennon was worth a great deal more to the world than Mark Chapman. As far as I'm concerned, Chapman has forfeited his right to live—and now Hinckley, too, the one who made the attempt on Reagan—those two come so frighteningly close to the villains in ***STEWART***...

Look, I have no love at all for Ronald Reagan, and there might even have been some poetic justice in this arch-foe of gun control falling victim to an assassin with a forty-seven-dollar over-the-counter murder weapon, but both Chapman and Hinckley wanted, needed, ***craved*** celebrity, craved self-validation, and both were prepared to satisfy their hungers at the expense of another's life. Both were indulging their weaknesses. If a society prizes the lives of its poets and its presidents, then maybe their killers ought to be executed to demonstrate that fact.

I might not feel so strongly about this if there were actually such a thing as life imprisonment. That, to me, is a far worse punishment. But "life" usually translates to about seven years, and that makes it very thinkable to commit murder.

Really, that's the other major theme in ***STEWART***, too. That the moment an action is detached from its logical consequences, the way people think about that action changes drastically.

Have you ever wondered, by the way, not to digress ***too*** much farther, why it seems so hard to get people interested in a murder mystery story these days—and why that genre of film has been replaced by the "knife movies" like ***HALLOWEEN, FRIDAY THE 13TH***, and the rest? It's because none of the essential suspense elements of the murder mystery obtain anymore. Human life, for all our Caring and Sharing, is no longer considered so valuable that the taking of ***one*** such life seems a large enough subject for a movie. And because the murderer really faces only minimal punishment, the impact of the old murder trial scene is lost completely; the killer has so little to lose if he's caught! You have to go for mass murder now, and summary execution on screen, to get the same effect.

Enough. Back to ***STEWART***. Was there other criticism of it?

SANDERSON: Yes—that it deals with dated material.

GERBER: ***STEWART*** is dealing with trends in the whole of American culture, not just today's, not just California's. Are you kidding? I've said before, I chose California just because it was the most ***concentrated*** arena for this kind of behavior.

SANDERSON: Well, perhaps people also felt that targets such as disco and cocaine had been done too much. What would your response be to that? That perhaps they were looking at the superficial aspects of the story?

GERBER: For openers. I would also tell them to stop thinking in terms of ***targets*** and start thinking in terms of ***descriptions***. Every time one of those specifics, like disco, falls by the wayside, another one arises to take its place. Our culture is a hydra. Somebody asked me, if I were doing the disco zombie today, what would it be? It'd be a dead guy in Western clothes and a cowboy hat, riding a bucking bronco machine that hops on its pedestal in pogo stick fashion—and he would ride it through the wall singing, "We all grew up to be cowboys!" And there's no difference. The fact that one is dressed in disco glitter and the other in Western gear makes absolutely no difference. They are the same person. (Laughs) In fact, they ***are*** the same person—John Travolta! That's how utterly interchangable the fads are! I could've dressed the zombie in a zoot suit, and it wouldn't have made any difference.

The only thing that has changed, really, is that fads are no longer generation-specific or decade-specific. The speed and depth with which they penetrate into people's lives—that's what's really changed, how quickly they're adopted and discarded, how quickly people use up entire personalities these days, entire sets of values and aesthetics.

SANDERSON: Cat Yronwode has described your strips to me as dramatic monologues by characters to audiences who may or may not be present. This could be applied, actually, to Fossick and Dropp with their prose sections in ***STEWART***, and certainly to the diary in ***"The Kid's Night Out,"*** and if you get away from the prose form, to the trial of the clown, or Nighthawk telling us his own story, or Dr. Bong relating his origin for page upon page...do you see anything in this?

GERBER: Probably a deficiency in my writing. (Laughs) Part of it has to do with the medium of comics and the need to deliver a lot of exposition very quickly. In a lot of cases, I am sure that this was done to spell everything out, so the reader knew precisely who the character was and why he was acting as he did.

SANDERSON: Do you consider the prose sections a compromise with the essentially visual nature of comics? Do you worry that you might be over-writing at all?

GERBER: Certainly. Looking back at a lot of my stuff, I find a lot of it over-written and overblown. The prose sections, though, weren't a case of over-writing, but an attempt to exploit a kind of fluidity I thought could exist in the medium. But the captions—especially the Man-Thing captions—some of them are very purple, and over-written, and I apologize! (Laughs)

SANDERSON: So you think you've overcome that in ***STEWART***?

GERBER: It was a step, anyway—maybe a step too far. I'm wondering if there's enough information given to keep the reader aware of all that's happening. I tried purposely not to hit people over the head with this one, to show rather than tell, to let the visuals and the concepts speak for themselves. And I have a feeling that the reaction might have been quite a bit different if I'd adhered to the old way, taking the reader by the hand and leading him step by step through the story, pausing to point out every important detail in a caption.

SANDERSON: It seems to me that often your stories, especially in ***MAN-THING***, take the form of a character's cry out for acceptance and solace despite his own failings. I see this in ***"The Kid's Night Out," "Song-Cry of the Living Dead Man," "Night of the Laughing Dead,"*** and in the satyr stories. And in ***"Song-Cry"*** and the satyr stories, you not only have this element, but you seem to be offering the sexual union, the formation of the love relationship as the means for salvation.

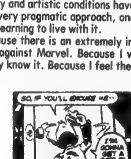
GERBER: Yeah, well, it isn't. (Laughs) In case anybody has any doubts, it isn't.

SANDERSON: Where do you go from here as a writer in comics, TV, and elsewhere?

GERBER: Right now, with the pressures of the lawsuit on me, I'm mainly concerned with completing the work I've already obligated myself to. The next season of ***THUNDARR*** and other story-editing chores at Ruby-Spears, the ***PHANTOM ZONE*** mini-series, and maybe an occasional contribution to the alternative magazines.

It's been very difficult for me to think beyond that, toward other directions I want to take, because, frankly, the financial burdens of the lawsuit make it necessary to travel the route that it most profitable. Literary and artistic conditions have to take a back seat for awhile. It's a very pragmatic approach, one that doesn't overly thrill me, but I'm learning to live with it.

I have to. Because there is an extremely important principle at stake in the suit against Marvel. Because I was wronged by that company, and they know it. Because I feel they should have to pay the consequences.



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Many comic collectors seem to feel that there are two basic types of comic publishers: the giants, like Marvel, DC, and Dell; and the minor publishers, like Progressive or Tower. There is, however, a third type of publishing company. This third type develops its own niche in the publishing world, and steadfastly issues a small but significant line of comics month after month. Eastern Color Printing Co. was such a publisher.

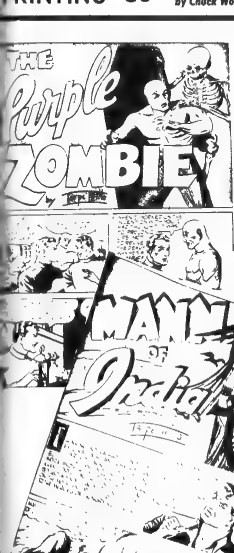
Eastern was much more than just a small but steadfast company, however. In fact, they will be forever immortalized in the hearts of comic historians because they are the company that first printed a modern-style comic book. The title of this first comic is ***FUNNIES ON PARADE***, and although Eastern does not appear to have actually been the publisher of this comic (rather, just the printer), Eastern must have seen the potential of the modern comic book package almost immediately. Eastern was also the first company to print a comic for newsstand sale (***FUNNIES ON PARADE*** was a giveaway comic), and by mid-1934 Eastern was issuing its own comic title, ***FAMOUS FUNNIES***.

In fact, Eastern was to have a major effect upon the earliest modern-style comics (prior to 1933, comic books were issued in at least six separate formats, none of which were very close in design to the modern-style comic first produced by Eastern). Other publishers not only followed Eastern's (and Max Gaines') lead in terms of the physical design of the comic, but also in terms of story content. Within about two years, other publishers would be issuing ***THE FUNNIES, KING COMICS, POPULAR COMICS,*** and ***TIP TOP COMICS***, all of which were predominantly (or entirely) newspaper strip reprints. The only significant publisher that did not follow Eastern's lead was Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, who was committed to the idea of issuing comics that were composed of predominantly new material. Wheeler's ideology, of course, is the moving force that eventually led to the publication of Superman (in the June, 1938 issue of ***ACTION COMICS***—although by this time Wheeler-Nicholson had sold his line of comics to Harry Donenfeld).

Given the favorable perspective of hindsight, it may seem obvious to us that many more people would like to read ***new*** comics than merely reprints of old Sunday funnies (this is why, in December of 1935, Wheeler-Nicholson issues ***NEW COMICS***, which is better known today as ***ADVENTURE COMICS***). Back in 1933 and 1934, however, the "smart" money was betting on the reprints, and Eastern Color Printing Co. was leading the way.

In point of fact, it seems that the 1930s comic market preferred quality strip reprints to original stories of lesser quality. By 1939, however, the the producers of original comic ***book*** material were in fact turning out quality products, and DC, the company with the first major superheroes, was capturing an impressive share of the market.

Eastern, although very committed its line of reprint comics through at least 1942, had decided by August of 1940



that is was time perhaps to learn from the super-heroes at DC and Timely, and in that month Eastern issued what many consider to be its most interesting title: ***REG'LAR FELLERS HEROIC COMICS***.

HEROIC was a star-studded publication of excellent quality. The first issue alone had twenty different features, including ***"Hydroman"*** by Bill Everett (created just about a year after Everett created The Sub-Mariner), ***"The Purple Zombie"*** and ***"Mann of India,"*** both by Tarpe Mills, two "Raymond-esque" features entitled ***"Don Dixon and the Hidden Empire"*** and ***"Tad of the Tanbark,"*** a bizarre political satire/humor strip entitled ***"Dinky Dinkerton,"*** various war-type strips, including ***"Sergeant Stony Craig and his U.S. Marines"*** and ***"Daredevils of Destiny,"*** as well as ***"Gordon Fife and the Boy King"*** and the Capt. Easy-type ***"Bill & Davey."*** There were reprints of Gene Byrne's ***"Reg'lar Fellers"*** and Russell Keaton's ***"Flyin' Jenny"*** (who would later have her own comic book). In addition to all of this, there were at least ten pages of editorial features, most of which centered around the Reg'lar Fellers club which was heavily promoted in each issue. There were also minor filler strips, including ***"Star Fleshes," "Wings Over America," Movie Hooey," "Amaze a Minute," "Kitty Moran," "Idiotities!"*** and others.

All together, these features added up to one spectacular comic book! ***HEROIC COMICS*** actually reached peak momentum about issue ***#7***, which saw the introduction of not only H.G. Peter's ***"Man O'Metal,"*** an adventure strip which Peter did for Eastern before he began doing Wonder Woman for DC, but also the first announcements for the new Reg'lar Fellers movie. In issue ***#8*** there was an ad for the Reg'lar Fellers summer radio show, and it was obvious by this point that ***REG'LAR FELLERS HEROIC COMICS*** was a comic of great significance. Within just a few issues ***HEROIC*** was presenting new strips by one of Timely's best artists (Everett), one of DC's best storytellers (Peter) and one of the best comic ***strip*** artists (Mills). In addition to all of this, the comic was tied in with a motion picture and a radio program!

Further, this attention to detail was reflected in the quality of the comics themselves. The stories often were either continued or referred back to earlier adventures, and there was a sense of movement in the characters' lives from issue to issue. For example, Hydroman's friend, Harry, made a special material from which Hydroman's girlfriend, Joyce, constructed a costume for Hydroman in issue ***#2***. Also in issue ***#2***, the government tried to electrocute The Purple Zombie, but instead managed to make him a deeper shade of purple. Even though super-heroes were not the type of characters which Eastern seemed to favor, they still managed to put out an excellent comic that was bejewelled with them!

By issue ***#12***, their experiment had reached mature form. Ben Thompson was now signing the Hydroman strips, not Everett, but Peter was still on Man O'Metal and Mills was still doing both the Purple Zombie and Mann of India (in fact, Tarpe had matured to her ***MISS FURY*** style by ***HEROIC #9***). In addition to this,

many of the minor strips had been dropped, and the ones which remained were lengthened, and arranged to look more like comic book stories than newspaper Sunday funnies reprints. Further, a new super-hero was introduced, whose name was ***"Music Master."***

Issue **#14** saw the introduction of ***"Rainbow Boy,"*** who first appeared when Hydroman (in aqueous form) was pierced by brilliant sunlight, which formed a rainbow from his body. Rainbow Boy, whose exact relationship to Hydroman was apparently unclear, could travel on light waves at the speed of light, much like Music Man could travel on sound waves (so long as the sound has some musical attribute), or Hydroman could travel on water waves (or through water pipes, or anywhere else that water went).

By **#13**, November, 1942, ***HEROIC's*** contents included the following: Hydroman, Rainbow Boy, Reg'lar Fellers, The Music Master, editorial Reg'lar Fellers club features, Daredevils of Destiny, Man O'Metal, Text with color illos, Flyin' Jenny, and both house and paid advertisements. Something a little strange began occurring shortly after that date, however, as Eastern began to change the focus of its super-hero comic.

Commencing somewhere between issues **#16** and **#25**, the cover feature switched from super-heroes (typically Hydroman and Man O'-Metal) to ordinary (albeit heroic) soldiers in action. Also, the covers continued to be painted, instead of line drawn (**#15** was the first painted cover, apparently, and by issue **#28** it seems that the covers were always painted). Of much greater significance is that by **#28** (January 1945), the super-heroes were obviously being phased out. Ignored on the comics' covers, the super-heroes were relegated to the back half of the comic, and the superior artists were withdrawn from the strips. Thus, issue **#28's** first half was filled with features like ***"One of Our Islands Is Missing," "I Seen My Duty and I Done It," "What Do You Know About: PARACHUTES," "How Did They Do It,"*** and ***"'Human' Torpedoes,"*** all of which are exactly like the cover in tone.

Presumably inserted in order to placate any loyal following that may have already been developed, the second half of **#28** (and presumably many of the other issues in this transitionary phase) featured The Music Master, Man O'Metal, Hydroman, and Flyin' Jenny.

Just one year later, in January of 1946, ***HEROIC COMICS #34*** (the Reg'lar Fellers part of the title had been dropped before issue **#28**) was without any super-heroes whatsoever. The first half of the comic was still filled with World War II war stories (the first one, ***"Mission Accomplished"*** is about a heroic Russian patriot), while the second half consisted of two continuing features: ***"The Kid From Brooklyn,"*** and ***"Vitamin,"*** a funny human story.

It was also about this time that Eastern began mixing a variety of art styles. These ranged from the excellence of Frazetta and Guardineer to the early work of Williamson to the dramatic work of Toth, down to the poorly-drawn hack work which filled many of the remaining pages. Many of the stories in Heroic were War-related after 1944, but by issue **#51** there were a number of non-war stories of heroism included in various issues, too. These featured characters like courageous police, school teachers, boy scouts and members of the Red Cross.

In fact, by **#51** Heroic was no longer being published by Eastern Color, but rather by Famous Funnies, Inc. ...at least according to the official indicia. In point of fact, however, it seems that the same group was actually using both the Eastern Color and the Famous Funnies names. Both publishers listed their address as 500 Fifth Ave., NY 18, NY, and both listed William J. Pape as President. The other major changes that had occurred at Eastern by ***HEROIC #51*** were that ***HEROIC*** was now referred to as ***NEW HEROIC COMICS***, and that there were no continuing strips which endured from issue to issue.

By the time **#71** appeared, in March of 1952, the title was declining. Although Frazetta would still have work appearing in the comic, the typical story length had by now shrunk to two or three pages. The editorial quality in Eastern's only other major title, ***FAMOUS FUNNIES***, had similarly slipped, and there was little other than Frazetta to distinguish Eastern's final years.

Eastern had been a significant comic publisher from 1933 to 1955. In fact, from 1933 to 1937, Eastern had dominated the comic book business, and had set the standards for the other companies to follow. In 1940, as they saw their relative position declining, Eastern had made a major attempt to re-assert itself, and had debuted a carefully-planned major comic title (***REG'LAR FELLERS HEROIC COMICS***). Although we may never know why it was that ***REG'LAR FELLERS HEROIC COMICS*** failed to establish itself and its super-heroes, it is worthwhile to know that Eastern had its heroic moments, and that the work therein was of excellent quality. In all, Eastern Color and Famous Funnies printed about twenty-eight titles over a twenty-two year period. They featured much more original material in their comics than they are normally credited with, and they have left an impressive body of material for posterity. Comic collectors who like something a little unusual would be well-advised to read over some of Eastern's publications before they, like most Golden Age comics, become unaffordable. ●

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WITH ONE MAGIC WORD...

SHAZAM! IN THE 1970s

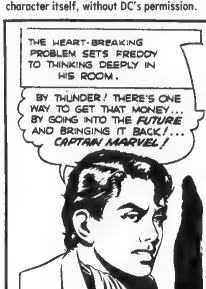
THE RETURN OF THE ORIGINAL CAPTAIN MARVEL

by Rich Morrissey

Several people have claimed credit for suggesting, in 1972, that DC Comics acquire from Fawcett Publications the right to publish the adventures of the original Captain Marvel. Most of the evidence seems to indicate, however, that the original inspiration came from Carmine Infantino.

Infantino had been made editorial director of DC in 1967, and had later become its publisher, in an attempt by the management to restore DC's prominent position in the market and offset its loss of ground to Marvel Comics. But his subsequent attempts to create and encourage the creation of new DC characters had led largely to a stable of short-lived titles, a few of them (like ***THE CREEPER*** and ***BAT LASH***) enjoying critical success but none becoming best-sellers like Marvel's-***SPIDER-MAN*** and ***FANTASTIC FOUR***. So, in the early '70 s, Infantino's mind began to turn toward acquiring characters who were already well-known. It was around this time that DC got the rights to Tarzan, The Shadow...and Captain Marvel.

Two factors made Captain Marvel a particularly attractive property from Infantino's point of view. In the first place, the Fawcett line of comic books had been dropped in the midst of the super-hero decline of the late '40 s and early '50 s—and, rather than continue a losing battle, Fawcett had agreed to a settlement of the long-standing DC lawsuit that had claimed the Captain Marvel stories had plagiarized from DC's Superman material. As a result, Fawcett (which was still a very successful magazine publisher, but no longer set up to publish adventure comics—although its name did appear on the ***DENNIS THE MENACE*** titles it had purchased from Pines) was a captive seller—it couldn't sell the rights to Captain Marvel to anyone else, or even revive the character itself, without DC's permission.


THE HEART-BREAKING PROBLEM SETS FREDDY TO THINKING DEEPLY IN HIS ROOM.
BY THUNDER! THERE'S ONE WAY TO GET THAT MONEY... BY GOING INTO THE FUTURE AND BRINGING IT BACK!... CAPTAIN MARVEL!

Mac Raboy's Captain Marvel Junior stories were more realistically drawn than normal Marvel Family fare, and had to adjust less to match 1970s art

In the second place, Fawcett had published an immense number of Captain Marvel stories, and even had the printing plates for many of them. Infantino considered the large inventory of past stories DC had—the technology it possessed, through people like Jack Adler (present-day vice-president of production), to reprint them—to be one of the company's greatest assets, and was always looking for ways to increase the supply. He knew that some day comic books might become largely reprint (as, indeed, has already taken place at companies like Harvey and Charlton) and, in fact, was continually experimenting with packages consisting entirely of old material.

As a result, the agreement reached by DC and Fawcett differed in many ways from most licensing arrangements. For a specified sum, Fawcett granted DC full rights to all the comic book stories and characters it still retained—and DC even made further arrangements to retain characters like Ibis the Invincible, who had earlier been licensed to Charlton. DC would not only retain these rights for fifteen years, but could in turn license the characters to other merchandising and retain the profits! To my knowledge, this arrangement is unique—if a property is popular enough to appear in a comic book, the owners generally want to keep the right to sell it to other media as well. But Fawcett agreed because of its special position—and because Captain Marvel, who hadn't been published for over twenty years, would have to rely on DC if he was ever to regain anything like his old popularity.

Infantino himself certainly realized the hazards of dealing with such an old property, which the vast majority of current comic book readers had been born too late to know. He deliberately set out to recapture the older market, making a point of getting the news of Captain Marvel's return into as many newspapers as possible. Surely, he thought, many of those old fans would be interested enough to pick up at least a copy or two of the revival, particularly those who had children of their own. The character obviously had a special appeal to have been so special in the first place; with the proper handling maybe he could find a new audience.

KWAK!
HE'LL BE MORE OPEN TO A DISCREET INQUIRY FROM RICH JANES!
DIG IT, MAN!
I HATE TO COMPLAIN, YOU UNDERSTAND, BUT BEING A SEMI-PERMANENT RESIDENT OF LIMBO-LAND SORTA CRAMPS MY STYLE!

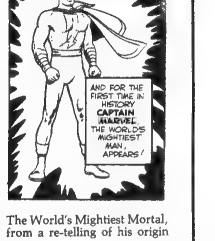
Marvel's Captain Marvel, whose use of his own name as the title of his magazine was protected by trademark law. Fawcett's claim lapsed, so DC had no claim.

Infantino considered that handling carefully in choosing an editor for the new Captain Marvel title. Usually there was no difficulty in deciding who would edit a book; it would go to whichever office the idea had originated in—but in this case the Fawcett editors had retired or died long before. Robert Kanigher was considered for a time, as he had done some free-lance writing for Fawcett in the '40s and was the only DC editor with actual experience with the character. But the books Kanigher edited for DC had been declining in popularity over the years, and he hadn't done *that* much for Fawcett. In the meantime, Julius Schwartz had read some of the books Fawcett had sent over, and expressed interest in the assignment—and he had already proved that he could make long-established characters like Batman and Superman into good sellers. Infantino considered, and decided to let Schwartz have the book.

It had been originally planned to call the new comic ***CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES***, continuing the Fawcett sequence. But at this point Marvel Comics stepped in. In 1967 Marvel, inspired by its company name and the reputation and success of the Fawcett hero, had created its own Captain Marvel—a completely different hero except for the name, but one who had been appearing in his own title ever since. Moreover, the Marvel executives had taken the precaution of trademarking the title of every comic they published (something DC did only with its more successful books at the time). While DC had been assigned Fawcett's copyright on *its* Captain Marvel material, and thus could use the name, the ***trademark*** "Captain Marvel" was protected only as long as it was in use. This use had lapsed when Fawcett folded ***CAPTAIN MARVEL ADVENTURES*** in 1953, leaving Marvel free to trademark and continue to claim the name from 1967 on.

A trademark is the equivalent of a brand name—a mark used to identify a product. A story cannot be trademarked, but the title of a magazine or a comic book can be, and Marvel has even trademarked the appearance of many of its characters. Marvel couldn't prevent DC from using "Captain Marvel" on the inside of the magazine, but it could, and did, refuse to allow it to be used in the title. DC finally came to an arrangement with Marvel that would allow it to use "The Original Captain Marvel" on its covers in exchange for a payment to Marvel—but only as a subtitle. The editor had to come up with something else for a main title.

Julie Schwartz had read enough of the stories to realize that the most memorable name in the series, after Captain Marvel's, was "Shazam!", the magic word Captain Marvel continually shouted to change to his other identity of Billy Batson, and vice versa. he therefore suggested ***SHAZAM!*** as the title of the Captain Marvel book, and ***SHAZAM!*** it



The World's Mightiest Mortal, from a re-telling of his origin story.

was. It was an excellent title from a commercial standpoint, but it had one serious drawback. Many young or uninitiated readers received the impression that the hero's name *was* Shazam rather than Captain Marvel, and even Sol Harrison called him by that name at least once. Schwartz tried his best to dispel that by placing "With One Magic Word" above the title, but it didn't always work—particularly after DC gave up its trademark payments to Marvel, and replaced "The Original Captain Marvel" with "The World's Mightiest Mortal." It was all too reasonable for readers to think Shazam was the World's Mightiest Mortal, rather than the Egyptian wizard who gave him his powers. Perhaps, for purposes of clarity, it would have been better if the ***WHIZ COMICS*** title—but then, it might have done less well with such a relatively irrelevant name.

And, whatever its title, Schwartz was determined to put the best possible people to work on the book. E. Nelson Bridwell was, aside from being DC's reprint editor (and there would certainly be reprints in ***SHAZAM!***), a long-time fan of Captain Marvel and the assistant editor on the Superman titles, several of which Schwartz edited. So he was offered a similar position on ***SHAZAM!***, and did more of the editing than was usually his share. They agreed at once to keep as much to the original light, semi-humorous style as possible. DC had a 24-page format at the time, and that would break neatly into three stories per issue—of which two would be new and one a reprint.

There was considerable discussion as to who would draw the new stories. Schwartz's initial choice was Bob Oksner, who had long been the head artist on DC's humor titles. He seemed appropriate enough for a character like Captain Marvel. Bridwell suggested Kurt Schaffenberger, who had worked on the Marvel Family during its Fawcett days and later came to DC. Even Murphy Anderson was re-

Bob Oksner was one of the artists originally considered for the Captain Marvel revival. He did eventually do some Captain Marvel lead stories, although his work appeared most often in the Mary Marvel featurettes.

UNCLE MARVEL, I ORDER YOU TO STEAL A MILLION DOLLARS FROM THE BANK!!!
HEH, SIS? AS CRIMES?
WHICH CAN'T PROBABLY CORRECT THINGS WITHOUT MY HELP!
"SECRET OF THE SMILING SWORDSMAN!"

portedly considered at one point, and it must be admitted that his smooth, slick style might have easily adapted to the clear, simple look C.C. Beck had pioneered at Fawcett. Inevitably, however, it occurred to Schwartz that if the Beck look was what they wanted, the ideal person to approach would be Beck himself.

C.C. Beck, now in business for himself in Florida, was eager to return to Captain Marvel "if they stuck to the original concept." Schwartz and Bridwell assured him that was their intention, and asked him to submit samples of his art on the Marvel Family, as were Oksner, Schaffenberger, and Anderson. Beck felt a bit insulted at being asked to submit samples, but did so—and Schwartz and Bridwell knew at once that they wanted him back. All they needed now were writers.

Ironically enough, in spite of their success with the head artist of the Fawcett line, nobody seems to have approached Fawcett's head writer, Otto Binder—in spite of the fact that Binder had gone to DC after Fawcett's demise and remained there for many years, working with both Schwartz and Bridwell before he finally retired in 1969. Perhaps it was this very fact that made the editors realize it would be no use, as his retirement had been under tragic circumstances involving a death in the family—or perhaps it had to with a reported attempt by Binder and several other DC writers to go on strike for better medical benefits at the time, which hadn't endeared him to the management. Now that Otto Binder is dead, the truth may never be known. Bridwell sent him a complimentary copy of ***SHAZAM #1***. Binder replied that his comic book career "seemed like a long-ago dream" and that he had no desire to return to the field.

Schwartz chose Denny O'Neil, who had already proved himself as the ideal scripter whenever Schwartz wanted to try something different, as head writer. O'Neil was backed up by Elliot Maggin, who had displayed a sense of humor in his earlier work (mostly for Green Arrow and Superman) that seemed appropriate for Captain Marvel, and Nelson Bridwell was interested in contributing a few stories, though at the time he was too busy to write very many. Neither O'Neil nor Maggin had read any Captain Marvel stories before, but after reading some of the Fawcett issues they became as enthusiastic about the character as Schwartz was.

SHAZAM! #1, featuring a Beck cover on which Superman himself welcomed Captain Marvel back to comics, went on sale in December 1972 with a scheduled frequency of eight times a year. Although not terribly impressive these days, when both DC and Marvel customarily launch new titles as monthlies, even this frequency was then a radical departure for DC, which almost invariably had begun all previous titles on a bimonthly schedule. Evidently Infantino and DC were very anxious to see ***SHAZAM!*** succeed—and, at least for a time, it did.

Even the old-time fans of Captain Marvel, including C.C. Beck himself, found little to complain about in the early issues. In the first issue Denny O'Neil retold the Captain's origin for the newer fans and explained his disappearance—and the reason he, Billy, and their friends and enemies had failed to age in 19 years—for the older ones. Perhaps Schwartz's insistence on two new stories every issue necessitated an artificial division into two stories, but that was a minor flaw. The old fans were too thrilled to see the "Big Red Cheese," Captain Marvel Jr., and Mary Marvel in action once more against Dr. Sivana, Mr. Mind, and other classic villains to complain.

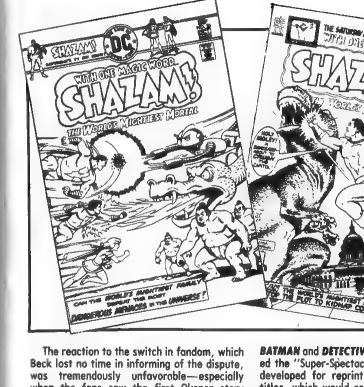
It wasn't until the summer of 1973 that the limitations of the new writers—and of Schwartz's strict three-story format—began to sink in. However fine it was to see all these old characters—and the imaginative new ones Maggin frequently came up with—in action again, there really wasn't too much for them to *do* in stories of eight or fewer pages. Otto Binder and the Fawcett writers had done much in that space; but O'Neill and Maggin had developed in an era when longer stories were the norm, and the Marvel influence had led to prolonged action scenes and greater emphasis on characterization. Rather than doing away with such things, the new writers began to cut down on the plot—leaving little but trivial vignettes that didn't contain much plot, characterization *or* action.

The difficulty was magnified by the reduction in standard original-art page size over the years, which prevented Beck from using as many panels or as great detail as he had at Fawcett. He had always been an advocate of simplicity in art, and Infantino and Schwartz agreed with him—at least for ***SHAZAM!***, but his new art came out *too* simple, with almost no backgrounds. Even Beck asked DC for permission to hire assistants as he'd done at Fawcett, but Schwartz refused to grant it. (It was a rather unfair decision in my opinion, because even then many artists *did* use background assistants, and still more have returned to the practice now.)

Moreover, in 1972-73 Infantino instituted a new policy—he reduced the total number of story pages per issue from 24 to 20 in the course of a single year. (He was then to drop three more pages in as many years; an appalling trend that has only recently been reversed.) Schwartz, however, continued to stick to his three-story format, which became so cramped that Nelson ended up *serializing* a 10-page reprint! With that it became clear that the reprints were getting hard to fit in. Julie decided to replace them with new stories of Mary Marvel, Captain Marvel, Jr., and the Marvel Family—that's right, all three Marvels *still* taking up only a third of the issue. The writers, Elliot Maggin and Nelson Bridwell, found it almost impossible to cram any sort of decent plot into five to seven pages.

The artists on the new series (which Beck had offered to draw, but he was once again turned down) once again reflected the editors' original suggestions. Bob Oksner became the regular artist on Mary Marvel, and Kurt Schaffenberger was reassigned to what had once been his major Fawcett assignment: the Marvel Family. Captain Marvel Jr.'s solo series had been most distinctive in its early days, under an artist, Mac Raboy, whose photographic detail and smooth rendering had been almost the antithesis of Beck's. Schwartz therefore assigned Dave Cockrum, a long-time Raboy fan, to the strip—but after Cockrum had drawn his first story (***"The Mystery of the Missing Newsstand,"*** in ***SHAZAM! #8***) Schwartz asked him to redraw most of the panels because, as Cockrum later told it, they looked *too* Raboy-ish and "not modern enough." The dejected Cockrum did so, and then left the strip (and soon DC altogether, until recently).

Nor was Dave Cockrum the only artist to be driven away by the title's editorial policies. C.C. Beck, like many fans, had become more and more discontented with the stories he was receiving. He rewrote many of them, but the O'Neil stories were becoming more and more plotless and the Maggin ones more and more silly. Eventually, Beck sent back two Maggin stories that he considered totally unacceptable, and asked for replacements. Instead, Schwartz decided he could do without temperamental artists and reassigned those and future Captain Marvel stories to his and Bridwell's original choices—Bob Oksner and Kurt Schaffenberger.


SHAZAM!
WITH ONE MAGIC WORD
SHAZAM!
THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL
SHAZAM!
THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL
THE SATURDAY MORNING SUPER-HERO WITH ONE MAGIC WORD
SHAZAM!
THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL
CAN THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL BE THE WORLD'S MOST HELPLESS VICTIM?
DOOMSDAY MEANS THE END TO HUMANKIND!

The reaction to the switch in fandom, which Beck lost no time in informing of the dispute, was tremendously unfavorable—especially when the fans saw the first Oksner story ("The Invasion of the Salad Men" in ***SHAZAM! #10***) which featured a spaceship from a planet of talking vegetables crashing on Earth. Beck had considered it a ridiculous story, and made some suggestions that would make it a possibly-inaccurate version Billy told on a children's program, but they were rejected. Beck and Bridwell continued to talk about a new, 20-page story that Beck would both write and draw, but after Beck's plot (involving the Seven Deadly Enemies of man and the demon Odius) was heavily rewritten by Bridwell, negotiations broke down.

The adverse reaction in fandom was partially responsible for the marked decline in sales of ***SHAZAM!*** during the second half of 1973. The first issue had been a sellout, and the next few issues had also done well—so well the title was quickly promoted to monthly. But the sales very quickly dwindled to a small fraction of what they had been, and it wasn't until much later that the DC management finally learned the true reason. The sales figures on ***SHAZAM! #1***—and, to a decreasing extent, those on subsequent issues—were primarily due to fans, dealers and speculators who bought multiple copies of the early issues and then tapered off. For many years the executives had believed fans and dealers had a negligible effect on circulation, and once they learned this was no longer true, they went wild about first issues and other projects specifically aimed at the fan market. But at the time, all Infantino could do was search desperately for a way to restore what he thought was ***SHAZAM!***'s early popularity.

Infantino's predilection for reprints had resulted in a new experimental format that seemed to be working well with occasional issues of other titles—and with **every** issue of ***BATMAN*** and ***DETECTIVE COMICS***. This extended the "Super-Spectacular" 100-page format developed for reprint collections to regular titles, which would contain 20 pages of new material and be filled out with reprints. With its slipping sales and the availability of top-quality reprints, ***SHAZAM!*** lent itself perfectly to a reduction to bimonthly frequency, but with **every** issue now in the Super-Spectacular format. Whatever else it did, the change would at least improve the average quality of the stories—even with his and Schwartz's mixed success in obtaining new material, Bridwell was able to bring the very best of the Fawcett stories back into print.

Moreover, the new stories also improved—because, with so many reprints in each issue, Schwartz no longer saw any need to try to squeeze three stories into 20 pages. After the first Super-Spectacular issue, #11 (whose new material had been prepared before the change was announced), the new Junior and Mary stories ran eight pages, backing up new 12-page Captain Marvel stories, while the new Marvel Family stories ran a full 20 pages. Denny O'Neil dropped almost completely the shorter stories to which he was so ill-suited, though he continued to write the Marvel Family novels. Elliot Maggin finally achieved an effective blend of plot, action and humor in most of Cap's 12-pagers, while Nelson Bridwell did his best to recapture the Fawcett days in the Junior and Mary back-ups.

Even the diverse team of Oksner and Schaffenberger finally found its proper balance. Schaffenberger remained sole artist on the Marvel Family with their expansion and, after one story by Dick Giordano, took over the Junior stories as well. Oksner continued to draw Mary, and to split the Captain Marvel stories with Schaffenberger—each drawing the lead story when it was the other's turn to do the backup. If it wasn't quite up to Fawcett levels, at least the new material didn't make fans wince any longer.

Besides, the Super-Spectacular package provided for unique flexibility. This was most successful in ***SHAZAM #16***, which Bridwell decided to use as a replacement for the aborted Beck solo story by devoting the whole issue to the Seven Deadly Enemies of Mankind. Oksner drew a very dramatic cover, while Bridwell searched the files for stories relating to each of the vices and finished by assigning those he couldn't find (Envy and Injustice) to the two new stories. The only flaw in the package was Schwartz's insistence on both beginning and ending with a new story, which resulted in Nelson's rather uninspired Mary Marvel story winding up the issue, rather than the logical finale—a ***WHIZ COMICS*** classic in which all seven of the evil gods came back to life. Even so, the mixed reprint/new material format worked very well in this and other issues. It's unfortunate that it didn't prove a sales success.

SHAZAM!, in fact, was even less successful than the other magazines that had used this formula—they all dropped back to 32 pages at the beginning of 1975, but all but ***SHAZAM!*** increased their frequency at this time. But the new material in ***SHAZAM!*** continued in the same vein through #20—the page count had been dropped to 18 at the same time, and even Schwartz saw the futility of trying to squeeze three stories into that many pages. Instead, he reduced the stories to 11-page Cap leads and alternating 7-page Junior and Mary backups, which still worked reasonably well.

But not well enough to continue to survive on the stands, now that speculators had long ago lost interest in the title. The sales figures dropped so low that the title was actually losing money, and would ordinarily have been cancelled—except for the agreement with Fawcett, which still had twelve years to go. So Infantino decided to make the title lose as little money as possible—with ***#21***, its frequency was decreased to quarterly and the new stories were entirely replaced by reprints.

There was now only room for two stories in an issue. Bridwell continued to select classic stories to reprint which gave those few buyers who still liked the Marvel Family their money's worth. ***SHAZAM!*** was still serving a genuine need, because Captain Marvel had, as Infantino had anticipated, become a very successful merchandising property for DC.

Unlike the readers of the comic book, many of the businessmen interested in licensing characters remembered the Captain well, and were willing to pay for the privilege of using him on clothes, toys, and even a television program. The rights to a ***SHAZAM!*** TV show (it could have been called ***CAPTAIN MARVEL*** from a legal standpoint, as no other character by that name had ever appeared on television, but DC understandably insisted on the use of the title of its comic book rather than Marvel's) were acquired by Norm Prescott of Filmation Associates, a producer of television cartoons who intended to offer the series for Saturday mornings in the fall of 1974.

At this time, the pressure from parents' groups like the Boston-based Action for Child-

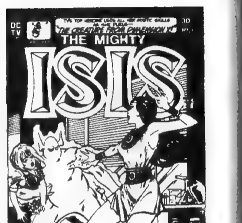
ren's Television was at its peak, and the networks were anxious to eliminate violence and include moral lessons in their children's programs. So the television Captain Marvel would use his powers mostly to save people from natural disasters, with a minimum of fighting criminals. In fact, he's spend most of each show in his Billy Batson identity. Billy and his heroic predecessor (renamed "Mr. Mentor" probably because Prescott didn't want to compound the confusion about the hero's name) would drive around in a van, encountering children with problems and helping to solve them. The six "Elders"—the gods and heroes who gave Captain Marvel his powers—fascinated the Filmation writers, so they too would contact Billy at the beginning of each episode and quote some advice that would help him in his adventure.

They showed this version to the DC executives, who accepted it except for the presentation of Mentor as Billy's predecessor. Not wanting any changes made in the man who, after all, *was* the title character of ***SHAZAM!***, they suggested that Mentor instead be identified as the man who first brought Billy into the subway tunnel where he met Shazam (and who *was* never identified, though Nelson has suggested he was the messenger of the gods —a charter member of the Shazam pantheon, Mercury). The Filmation people agreed to the change, but their scripts ended up not identifying Mentor's origin at all except to hint that he was much older than he looked. The artists depicted him as a middle-aged man, gray-haired but appearing much younger than Shazam did. The package completed, Prescott took it to the CBS executives, who told him, "A great idea! But why don't you do it in live action?"

It seemed another complaint of the ACT people had been the fact that children's programs, particularly on Saturday morning, seemed to consist of nothing but cartoons. Filmation, as its name indicates, had never produced anything else—but Prescott considered it and decided that, if Captain Marvel wasn't going to appear much anyway, the special effects for a live ***SHAZAM!*** would be within the network's budget. So the contract was signed for Filmation's first live show, and it was assigned a place on the 1974-75 schedule.

The part of Billy Batson went to Michael Gray, who had had a supporting role on a prime-time comedy with Brian Keith, ***THE LITTLE PEOPLE***, and at the time was something of a teenage idol. Les Tremayne, a veteran Broadway actor, was cast as Mentor—he was older and fatter than the character conceived by the animators, but gave Mentor a sense of humor without detracting from his dignity. Captain Marvel was portrayed by Jackson Bostwick, a former stuntman—but the importance of the role as seen by Filmation wasn't great. In early 1975, when prime-time stars like Carroll O'Connor and Redd Foxx were threatening to quit unless they got more money, Bostwick followed their example. O'Connor and Foxx were rehired at the sums they requested, but Bostwick found himself unceremoniously dumped and replaced by John Davey for the 1975 and 1976 seasons. (Not that either of them got *that* much work, because the amount of new material on Saturday morning TV is not great. There were only 14 episodes filmed with Bostwick during the entire 1974-75 season, and Davey appeared in an equal number during his *two* years in the role!)

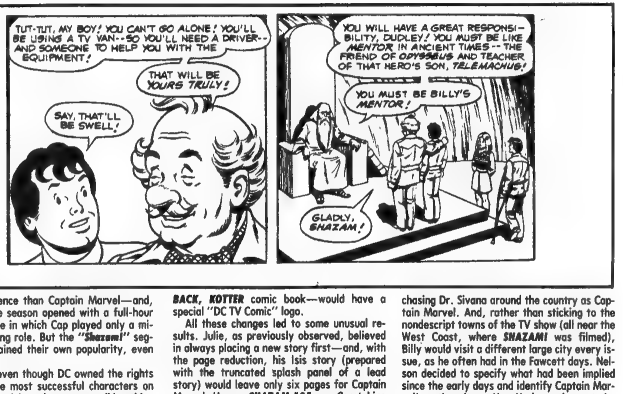
The part of the original conception that transferred the least gracefully to live action was the Elders and their advice. It was obviously too expensive to hire six other actors to spout only a line or two each—but, rather than do the sensible thing and delete that segment altogether, Prescott retained the Elders as animated figures who stood out like so many sore fingers when they gave their advice to Billy at the beginning of each program. He'd sit before a dome with a lot of lights on it when they started blinking, recite a silly verse, and receive cryptic advice that boiled down to little more than common sense. It added nothing to the stories, but was nonetheless retained right up through the last season—perhaps because it was the only real tie-in to the meaning of Billy's magic wand.



THE MIGHTY ISIS, one of the DC/TV comics. The superheroine Isis was a latter-day addition to Captain Marvel's cronies.

Whatever its faults, the ***SHAZAM!*** TV show was a huge success, and by the 1975 season Filmation and every other producer that could were jumping on the bandwagon with live programs. Eager to repeat his success, Prescott contacted DC to discuss the possibility of a similar program—perhaps one that could have a slight tie-in with ***SHAZAM!***, and a female lead character to attract more girls (and also the adolescent boys, as Michael Gray drew the adolescent girls) to the program. After some discussion with Denny O'Neil, Filmation developed ***ISIS***, who was something of a cross between Captain Marvel and another old Fawcett hero, Ibis the Invincible. Her connection with Captain Marvel was slight (she received her powers from a necklace made by an ancient Egyptian wizard—it was only hinted that this wizard was Shazam), but her half hour was combined with the Captain's in 1975 as ***THE SHAZAM/ISIS HOUR***. As portrayed by Jo-Anna Cameron in a miniskirted costume in a high school setting much more interesting than the ***"SHAZAM!"*** ones, Isis captured an even

The live-action Captain Marvel from Filmation's *SHAZAM!* series.


TUT-TUT, MY BOY! YOU CAN'T GO ALONE! YOU'LL BE USING A TV VAN--SO YOU'LL NEED A DRIVER--AND SOMEONE TO HELP YOU WITH THE EQUIPMENT!
THAT WILL BE YOURS TRULY!
SAY, THAT'LL BE SWELL!
YOU WILL HAVE A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY, DUDLEY! YOU MUST BE LIKE MENTOR IN ANCIENT TIMES--THE FRIEND OF ODYSSEUS AND TEACHER OF THAT HERO'S SON, TELEMACHUS!
YOU MUST BE BILLY'S MENTOR!
GLADLY, SHAZAM!

greater audience than Captain Marvel—and, by 1976, the season opened with a full-hour Isis adventure in which Cap played only a minor, supporting role. But the ***"Shazam!"*** segments maintained their own popularity, even so.

And yet, even though DC owned the rights to two of the most successful characters on children's television, the company did nothing with Isis and continued to publish ***SHAZAM!*** only as a quarterly reprint book. Carmine Infantino felt he'd given it his best shot, and that reprints were as good as or better than new stories, anyway. From the reaction in fandom, most fans seemed to agree.

Infantino did decide, eventually, to change the format of ***SHAZAM!*** once more—and make it into a 64-page giant, since he felt reprints fit best into larger (and more profitable) packages. But before the change was made, Infantino had been replaced as publisher by Jenette Kahn a much more media-oriented person who felt reprints should never be used unless they compared favorably with what was currently being published. She considered it silly that DC's characters should achieve success elsewhere without the comic books taking advantage of it, and took immediate steps to capitalize on ***THE SHAZAM/ISIS HOUR***'s popularity.

Her first order of business was to get Isis established as a DC character at once—so Julie Schwartz, still the official editor of ***SHAZAM!***, commissioned an 11-page story for the 25th issue of that book, which was drawn by Dick Giordano. Kahn then decided both Captain Marvel and Isis ought to have their own books, with all-new material to capture as much of their television audience as possible. ***SHAZAM!***, she decided, would ***not*** become a Giant but would stay a 32-page title, under the editorship of Joe Orlando (since Julie now had no time to provide new material for it regularly). The ***ISIS*** book would begin the following month, and both titles—along with a comics version of another DC Saturday morning show, ***SUPER FRIENDS***, and a ***WELCOME BACK, KOTTER*** comic book—would have a special "DC TV Comic" logo.

All these changes led to some unusual results. Julie, as previously observed, believed in always placing a new story first—and, with the page reduction, his Isis story (prepared with the truncated splash panel of a lead story) would leave only six pages for Captain Marvel. Hence, ***SHAZAM #25*** saw Cap taking second place in his own book, although he did make a cameo appearance in the Isis story—and the two stories in the issue prepared by two different editors.

With Denny O'Neil busy with other things (and, as the first story made only too clear, having no ability to write specifically for younger readers and accomplish very much) and Elliot Maggin no longer working for DC, Joe Orlando offered the only other ***SHAZAM!*** writer, E. Nelson Bridwell, the regular assignment. Bridwell eagerly accepted, and once again suggested Kurt Schaffenberger as regular artist. This too was agreeable to all parties—but Vince Colletta, who had been appointed Art Director of DC by Kahn, wanted to return to the strip (he'd inked a few of Oksner's stories) and actually paid Schaffenberger ***more*** for just pencils than he had been getting for complete art. It must be admitted that the Schaffenberger/Colletta stories ***did*** capture the Beck simplicity better, but I agree with most fans in preferring those stories (***SHAZAM! #25, 26,*** and ***28***) in which Schaffenberger inked his own pencils. He captured the old Fawcett characters as if he'd never left them.

Originally, Nelson Bridwell wasn't thrilled with his instructions to imitate the TV show in his scripts—but he quickly worked out details in a manner that would follow Filmation's lead, but at the same time take the strip more in the direction in which ***he*** wanted to go. The television Billy toured the country in a van, and the comic book Billy would do the same—but, rather than be on a vague mission to help kids in trouble, he'd have the dual objective of taping a series of specials as Billy Batson and chasing Dr. Sivana around the country as Captain Marvel. And, rather than sticking to the nondescript towns of the TV show (all near the West Coast, where ***SHAZAM!*** was filmed), Billy would visit a different large city every issue, as he often had in the Fawcett days. Nelson decided to specify what had been implied since the early days and identify Captain Marvel's native city as New York, so the route he worked out took him to Northeastern cities for the time being.

As for Mr. Mentor, the casting of Les Tremayne in the TV role suggested to Nelson an ideal substitute for him in the comic book. Tremayne looked very much like Dudley Batson, Billy's self-appointed "uncle"—so Nelson was allowed to use Uncle Dudley, with a recently-grown mustache, as Billy's cameraman and companion on his trip. The result was the best character development in the strip since DC took it over—because Dudley had previously been largely a one-note character. Conceived as an inside joke by the original Fawcett staffers and modelled on Jack Binder, head ***"Mary Marvel"***, artist, Dudley's main ***schtick*** had been to dress up as "Uncle Marvel" and fool the public and Marvel Family into accepting him as one of them, so he could run the family charity. He did fool much of the public, but he couldn't fool the Marvel Family itself—and, unless he was a total idiot, he surely realized that before too long. Denny O'Neil had, therefore, treated him as if he ***were*** a total idiot, but that wasn't the way he was intended—so Nelson's melding him with Mentor was long overdue. The Uncle Marvel costume was reserved for special occasions when a villain needed to be bluffed, and with a sigh of relief Dudley announced he was "getting too old for such things." Although he didn't quite acquire all of Mentor's dignity, he did receive enough to become a much more interesting, intelligent, and well-rounded character.

As in the live filming, the Elders and their lighted dome were the biggest stumbling block in the comic book adaptation. Superfluous as

they were even on TV, Joe Orlando wanted them in—so Nelson toned them down a bit by having Billy (or Cap, or even Uncle Dudley) use the lighted dome—dubbed the "Eterni-Phone"—to contact *them* instead of vice versa. Moreover, Billy customarily called only *one* of the Elders in each issue, and although they still threw cryptic quotes at Billy, Nelsen used his background in mythology and legend to make the Elders more in character than the indistinguishable animated figures on the TV show. Solomon, for instance, quoted only his own writings in the Biblical Book of Proverbs.

Another weak point of the new series stemmed from Nelson's desire to follow the Fawcett tradition by having Captain Marvel meet real residents of the cities he visited. It was a good idea, but Kahn refused to pay the extra money required to arrange for local celebrities to appear. (This was most evident in the Detroit story, where Mr. Tawny, the talking tiger, tried a baseball career with the Detroit Tigers. None of the members of the team could be called by name, and the sequence seemed flat as a result.) So Nelson decided to resort to another Fawcett practice, and use local distributors of DC comics—which may have helped boost Fawcett's circulation of the book in those cities, but did little if anything for DC's. It became ridiculous for Captain Marvel to happen to be on old friend of every distributor in the Northeast, and it would have made much more sense, in my opinion, to use prominent local fans (who certainly wouldn't need to be paid to appear in a comic book) instead, but it was never tried.

DC TV COMIC
NO 22 DEC. 35¢
THE SATURDAY MORNING SUPER-STAR! WITH ONE MAGIC WORD...
SHAZAM!
Regards to Kamen—Fabe/Beck
THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MORTAL
YER OUT!
THE EARTH IS DOOMED! THERE'S NO WAY CAPTAIN MARVEL CAN WIN—! THE GREAT ARR-MIND HAVE THIS GAME FIXED! NO HA-HEE HO HEE HI!
GOOD GRIEF! IF CAPTAIN MARVEL FAILS TO BEAT THIS ALIEN TEAM—IT MEANS THE END OF THE WORLD!
Kirby/Sinnott

Captain Marvel on his city-to-city tour: This issue happened with the Detroit Tigers, yet none of them could be called by name. The national tour gambit was borrowed from the Golden Age of Comics.

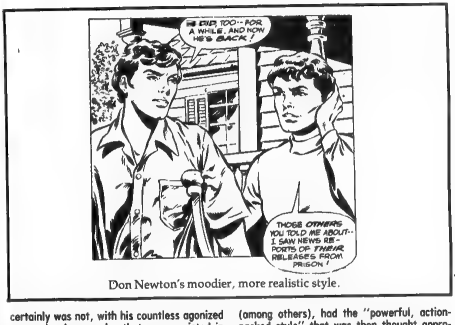
Still, on the whole, this new series of stories under the Orlando/Bridwell/Shaffenberger team was DC's best yet for the character. What Schwartz had done wrong during his tenure, Nelson said around this time, was to base *all* his stories on the Fawcett *back-ups*—he now tried to bring in more of the adventure of the Fawcett *lead* stories. The stories were infinitely better than most of the O'Neil and Maggin ones—and, for the first time at DC, the villains became fit adversaries for the Marvel Family once more. After following Sivana for five issues, Cap finally caught up with and jailed him in Pittsburgh—only to have Mr. Mind take over as his recurring antagonist. Other old villains popped up as their subordinates—Ibac, Aunt Minerva, Black Adam, and Mr. Atom: the latter two making their first new appearances at DC. Billy and Dudley were rolling merrily along, and were ready to continue on to the rest of the country, when there was another editorial change. Joe Orlando's position as Managing Editor for the entire DC line was taking up more and more of his time, and he had to give up most of his books—so, with *SHAZAM! #31*, Jack C. Harris took over as editor.

The first two Harris issues continued in the same story vein as the Orlando ones, but Kurt Schaffenberger was replaced as artist by Tenny Hanson, whose attemps at simplicity resulted in a very crude style, especially when Vince Colletta got through with his pencils. After a temporary rise, the sales on *SHAZAM!* were decreasing again (so much for those distributors Nelson had hoped would push a book they appeared in) and Harris felt the time was ripe for more changes. He told Nelson Bridwell that, from then on, the title would be done completely straight—he wanted stories with excitement and drama.

"Did you read the script I just turned in for *#34*?" Nelson replied. "That *has* it!"

Jack read it, and agreed that it did. After all, Bridwell had always taken Captain Marvel relatively seriously (which is probably why he did so well with him—he was trying to tell funny stories *about* him rather than just writing silly stories about silly characters as other DC writers had), and in this story he was almost totally serious, as was traditional in the Captain Marvel, Jr. series. Both Junior and Captain Nazi played a large role in the script, which took place in Chicago. So, with a bit of editing, it was given to two artists with a completely different style, Al Weiss and Joe Rubinstein. The "DC TV Comic" logo was taken off the cover (leaving only ***SUPER FRIENDS*** in the group, both *ISIS* and *KOTTER* having been cancelled several months before), and the issue was blurbed as a whole new look for Captain Marvel in DC's other titles.

As such, it was relatively good as far as the story was concerned, but the art was totally unsuitable for Captain Marvel. Bridwell later defended it on the ground that it was more a story of Captain Marvel Jr., who'd always been drawn more realistically by Mac Raboy and his successors. But "realistic" Weiss most



Don Newton's moodier, more realistic style.

certainly was not, with his countless agonized poses showing muscles that never existed in reality—even C.C. Beck, in his own way, had been more realistic. The artists had attempted to reconcile their new style with the old, cartoonish faces of Billy and Cap that never showed their eyes, but only ended up giving them even more twisted faces that appeared to be constantly staring into the sun. Although both excellent artists in their own way, Weiss and Rubinstein clearly weren't the ones for Captain Marvel, and they never did another story.

The unsuitability of this Captain Marvel art was exceeded only by that in a special tabloid that also appeared in early 1978, featuring the first major appearanc of Cap with Superman. The ***SUPERMAN VS. SPIDER-MAN*** one-shot with Marvel Comics in 1976 had done so well that DC had followed it up with tabloids pitting Superman against other powerful opponents *it* owned or could get the rights to—there'd already been tabloids in which he faced Wonder Woman and Muhammad Ali, and now it was time for him to fight Captain Marvel. The logical choices to write and draw the book would have been the writers and artists who already had experience and familiarity with both characters—Nelson Bridwell, Denny O'Neil or Elliot Maggin as writer and Kurt Schaffenberger, Pete Costanza or even Bob Oksner as artist. Instead, the book was inexplicably turned over to Gerry Conway and Rich Buckler, with Julie Schwartz celebrating his editorial swan song with Captain Marvel.

I can only guess at the reasoning that brought this hugely inappropriate team together. Conway had his talents, but dealing with powerful heroes like Superman and Cap wasn't generally considered one of them—but then, he *had* written all the other ***"SUPERMAN VS. —"*** tabloids except the Muhammad Ali one (which, not entirely coincidentally, was the only one of the four to receive much critical acclaim, but all sold well). Buckler, although a shameless swiper from Neal Adams (among others), had the "powerful, action-packed style" that was then thought appropriate for the tabloids, however inappropriate it proved to be for Cap and even, for the most part, for Superman. His cover for the tabloid was one of the worst ever produced at DC or any other company, with an outrageous title ("Superman vs. Shazam!") that set the attempts to reconcile the confusion about Captain Marvel's name back by several years, and made the heroes look as if they were executing a quaint dance step rather than fighting.

On the inside, however, Conway and Buckler did their best to produce an interesting story, and the result was far from a total loss. There were some interesting interactions between the villains Conway assembled (Black Adam, the Quarrm sand-creature from ***SUPERMAN #233***, and a Martian sorcerer) and a decent plot. Buckler did a somewhat distracting but generally competent job of illustrating the story, and the only sore points were the over-emphasis on the fight between the two heroes (which lasted far too long, and left Supergirl and Mary Marvel to do most of the real work) and its unsatisfying result. There was really no need for Superman to win, especially with the indication that Cap didn't use his full strength and the unlikely suggestion that his powers were slightly weakened in the Earth-One dimension. I can only conclude that Julie Schwartz, still smarting under the contractural requirement that Superman let Muhammad Ali win their fight of two months before and discover his secret identity to boot, was determined that *his* hero get his own back from ***some-one***.

In the meantime, Jack C. Harris had finally found his new direction for the ***SHAZAM!*** book itself. Bridwell had expanded his original plot into a Marvelesque series of adventues that brought an end to Billy's cross-country trip (now that the ***SHAZAM!*** TV show had gone off the air in the fall of 1977), and sent him back to New York in a complex plot involving not only Captain Nazi but King Kull, Dr. Sivana, Billy's unscrupulous Uncle Ebenezer, and Satan himself. The new regular artist (inked by Schaffenberger on his first few outings to ease the transition) was Don Newton, a former fan artist and long-time fan of Captain Marvel. Newton had drawn Cap in a very traditional style for fanzines, and had even been considered as an assistant by C.C. Beck when he was trying to get DC to increase his budget. Now, however, he drew Captain Marvel in a more realistic style that approached the Raboy look Bridwell had originally hoped for. He did seem to have some trouble with Captain Marvel's face, which at first looked too much like Superman's, but he gradually came up with his own acceptable versions of all the characters.

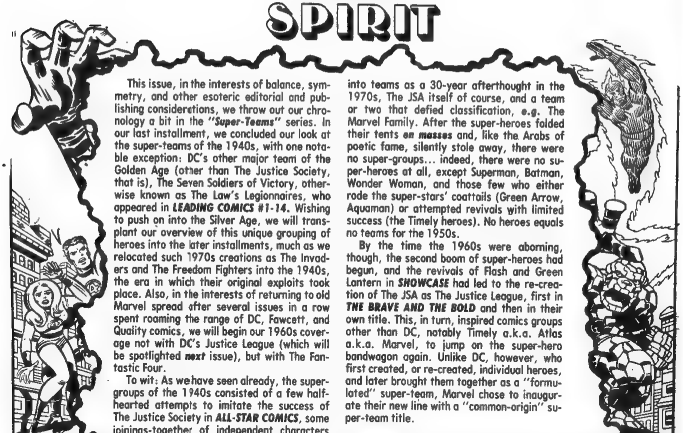
Unfortunately, Harris' ambitious plans for ***SHAZAM!*** were too late to preserve that magazine. His sales figures hadn't improved with his changes, and Jenette Kahn had finally realized that the new "Dollar Comics" she'd introduced in late 1976 offered the perfect opportunity to give characters who didn't sell well a space where they could preserve their merchandising value without having to sell comic books by themselves. Captain Marvel and other heavy-merchandising, light-selling characters like Black Lightning and Aquaman found their own magazines cancelled and their features in the back of other titles. Captain Marvel was now the concluding feature in ***WORLD'S FINEST COMICS***, where he had the assistance of *both* of DC's most popular characters, Superman and Batman, to carry the book.

And there he has remained ever since—a sad fate for the World's Mightiest Mortal, who once outsold his old rival but is now dependent on his charity for his very survival. Even in his declining days, though, Captain Marvel is comparatively healthy—Bridwell continues to write entertaining exploits for him (which now are once again self-contained for the most part, and frequently feature Mary and Junior as guests or even solo stars) which Newton illustrates with imaginative art that proves a realistic style needn't be bereft of humor.

At least twice, Captain Marvel has come close to emerging from his back room once more. Plans were made in 1979 to move his strip and most of the others from ***WORLD'S FINEST*** into a separate book, with ***WF*** becoming a 32-page title with only the Superman/Batman stories—but it was decided ***WF*** sold fine as it is, which at least helped Cap's prestige. (It's often forgotten that the final slot in a multiple-feature book is the traditional home of a popular feature, and is second only to the lead in importance. Before Cap arrived, that spot in ***WF*** was occupied by Wonder Woman, DC's most successful (at the time) character after Superman and Batman.

No, Captain Marvel may be only a sideliner at this point, but at least he's in the hands of people who care for him and do well by him. There are many, many comic book characters with nothing like Cap's illustrious history that aren't nearly so well off.

SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT



This issue, in the interests of balance, symmetry, and other esoteric editorial and publishing considerations, we throw out our chronology a bit in the ***"Super-Teams"*** series. In our last installment, we concluded our look at the super-teams of the 1940s, with one notable exception: DC's other major team of the Golden Age (other than The Justice Society, that is), The Seven Soldiers of Victory, otherwise known as The Law's Legionnaires, who appeared in ***LEADING COMICS #1-14***. Wishing to push on into the Silver Age, we will transplant our overview of this unique grouping of heroes into the later installments, much as we relocated such 1970s creations as The Invaders and The Freedom Fighters into the 1940s, the era in which their original exploits took place. Also, in the interests of returning to old Marvel spread after several issues in a row spent roaming the range of DC, Fawcett, and Quality comics, we will begin our 1960s coverage not with DC's Justice League (which will be spotlighted ***next*** issue), but with The Fantastic Four.

To wit: As we have seen already, the supergroups of the 1940s consisted of a few half-hearted attempts to imitate the success of The Justice Society in ***ALL-STAR COMICS***, some joinings-together of independent characters into teams as a 30-year afterthought in the 1970s, The JSA itself of course, and a team or two that defied classification, ***e.g.*** The Marvel Family. After the super-heroes folded their tents ***en masse*** and, like the Arabs of poetic fame, silently stole away, there were no super-groups... indeed, there were no super-heroes at all, except Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, and those few who either rode the super-stars' coattails (Green Arrow, Aquaman) or attempted revivals with limited success (the Timely heroes). No heroes equals no teams for the 1950s.

By the time the 1960s were aborning, though, the second boom of super-heroes had begun, and the revivals of Flash and Green Lantern in ***SHOWCASE*** had led to the re-creation of The JSA as The Justice League, first in ***THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD*** and then in their own title. This, in turn, inspired comics groups other than DC, notably Timely a.k.a. Atlas a.k.a. Marvel, to jump on the super-hero bandwagon again. Unlike DC, however, who first created, or re-created, individual heroes, and later brought them together as a "formulated" super-team, Marvel chose to inaugurate their new line with a "common-origin" super-team title.

FANTASTIC FOUR®

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A. ORIGINS

by Murray R. Ward

As examined previously, all comics features have two origins: the "who they are and how they came to be" story that begins the series of their adventures, and the "behind the scenes" story of their creation by writers, artists, and editors. The most obvious real-world antecedent of The Fantastic Four was The Justice League, in imitation of whose main thrust, i.e. a ***team*** of super-characters, Marvel publisher Martin Goodman was to spur writer/editor Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby to co-create the fabulous foursome. The only real similarity between the two features, though, is that they are both super-teams. In every other way they differ in concept, in style, and in execution. The JLA was and is a venerable tradition in comics, the reincarnation of an earlier venerable tradition, The Justice Society. The FF, as they were quickly nicknamed, were the rebels, the mavericks, and the trend-setters of the 1960s.

DC
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
BOOSTING CHALLENGES MY ILLUSORY-BEAM SKILL KEEP YOU HALF-WAY ALIVE!
IF NO IS ESCAPING FROM THE 20TH CENTURY IN HIS TIME CURE ALWAYS US TROPTYLL HERO IN THE FUTURE!
Introducing THE WIZARD OF TIME!
1981 DC Comics

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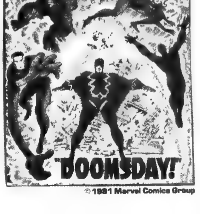

First, it should be noted that the formation of the FF entailed a dovetailing of several separate influences and ingredients. Jack Kirby's thematic contribution is obvious: as a common-origin team, The Fantastic Four are easily seen as a sort of "better" Challengers of the Unknown, which had been the last team feature Kirby had inaugurated prior to his work on The FF. The Challs were four experts in separate field of heroic endeavor who joined forces after they had survived a seemingly fatal plane crash. The FF went them one better. Their origin involved a rocket flight to the moon, which failed and crashed to Earth, and during which space-born cosmic rays granted the four adventurers super-human abilities. As the occasion was set on a grander scale (an attempted moon-flight in **1961** being a wee bit more thrilling than a simple rendezvous to appear on a radio—what, not even television?—program, as in the Challs' case), so was the team's reason for becoming costumed (though not at first) champions. The Challengers dedicated themselves to exploring the unknown, since they thought themselves to be "living on borrowed time." A neat little idea, a suitably heroic notion for comic heroes to have, but a bit hard to explain to the grade-schoolers who are supposedly comics' youngest audience. The old "get right back on the bucking bronco after he's booted you out of the corral" trick was perhaps less comprehensible to a generation who would grow up with a psychiatric profession ready to explain how perfectly natural a reaction the pathological fear of airplanes might be to one involved in an event such as the Challengers' origin. The Fantastic Four, on the other hand—however they played the iconoclasts of herodom in everything else—stuck to simple human nobility as a motive for their derring-do in the origin tale. As Spider-Man would later go through great personal trauma to learn, with great power comes great responsibility, and therefore, The FF had to become super-heroes simply because they had super-powers, and therefore, like Superman and every other character with abilities "far beyond those of mortal men," they had an in-built duty to use those powers to help their lesser-endowed fellows.

Given the beefed-up but basically similar Challengers-style origin to work with, Lee and Kirby pulled another inventive switch in choosing the members of their team. The Challengers, like many another comics team (The Blackhawks, Sgt. Fury's Howlers, etc.), had a variety of members each of whom possessed certain readily-identifiable characteristics, whether an accent, a typical speech pattern, or a special skill, or some combination of traits. The prototype of this type of team was to be found in the pulps: Doc Savage's "famous five" group of assistants. The Challs were composed of a leader-type, a brainy-type, a strongman-type, and a foolhardy/daredevil/hotheaded type. In keeping with making The FF a "better" version of the Challs, Stan and Jack combined the leader and the intellectual into a single character, and thus was created Dr. Reed Richards, virtually uncontestable

SINCE STEALING THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF THE SILVER SURFER, HE'S ALREADY BEATEN US ONCE!
I KNOW IT'S HOPELESS TO TRY TO MATCH HIS STRENGTH —BUT, THERE MAY BE ANOTHER WAY—!
THE ONE AREA IN WHICH I AM STILL THE EQUAL OF DR. DOOM IS THAT OF INTELLECT! IF I CAN OUT-FIGHT HIM, I MUST SOMEHOW OUT-THINK HIM!
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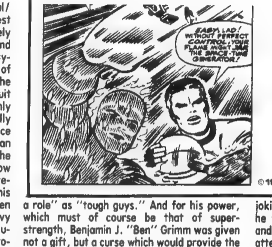
Reed Richards: "The 'Doc Savage' of The Fantastic Four. At left, a simple equation?

general of his little four-man army, and a hero who was far more likely to save the day by inventing a miraculous Rube-Goldbergian villain-nullifying machine than by dint of his cosmic-ray-given super-powers. Reed was the "Doc Savage" of The Fantastic Four, the man who could do practically anything, the super-genius, but steps were taken from the beginning to prevent him from becoming the boring character, personality-wise, that Doc had become, relying on his teammates to provide a human element to the series. First, Reed was taken out of the automaton class of characters by being given a love-life (unlike the eternally misogynist Doc), which we will examine further in a moment, and a personal history. Second, as leader, Reed Richards not only took it upon himself to suggest formation of the team in the first story, to direct their actions in battle, and to pull their chestnuts out of the fire more often than not in the denouement, but also to sum up, in ever-eloquent Stan Lee prose, the story's moral. The ultimate man of science he was, but also the man of faith and (can we mention this in a comic?) religion. And finally, Reed's oh-so-serious character was intruded upon by the nature of his powers, which were those of the earlier Quality hero, Plastic Man, who was perhaps the Golden Age's ultimate comic among the super-clan. How seriously can you take a hero who can stretch his arms, legs, neck, torso, and so on to ridiculous lengths, and whose prone form, when defeated, resembles a plate of split spaghetti or a spattering of leftover taffy? This, then, is the aptly-named (though not often called) Mr. Fantastic.

Proceeding to the required exuberant and reckless character who would balance the staid and cautious leader-figure, Lee and Kirby took a leaf from DC's then-recent history and revived a 1940s hero in a new guise: Thus a new Human Torch took his place in the new-born FF lineup. Unlike the original, who (though this angle was never really played up enough in the Golden Age) was actually an inhuman artificial android being, the new Torch

was truly Human, and was given the youthful/heroic name of Johnny Storm. As the youngest of the group, as well as the most immediately popular—thanks to his earlier namesake and the flamboyant nature of his flaming and flying powers—The Torch quickly grew tired of being "pushed around," as he saw it, by the older, wiser, and stronger members, and quit the team in a huff after the third issue, only to return, somewhat chastened but not wholly repentant, in the following episode. Evidence of his popularity came quickly, as The Human Torch was granted his own solo strip in the pages of ***STRANGE TALES***, a feat his fellow FFers could not equal, at least not immediately (it would take the Thing a decade to get his own strip in ***MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE***, and then he would forever have to share it with a bevy of guest-stars). Along with the addition of super-powers to their basic Challenger prototypes, The Fantastic Four, it seems, were also granted an influx of human emotion; they were not simple "one-line, one-joke" characters like the Savage quintet or DC's Metal Men. Where Mr. Fantastic strove for a balance between his personae as man of reason and man of emotion, Johnny Storm was not foredoomed to a role as the group "hothead" (with reference to more than his fiery abilities). Over the course of the series, he would grow and mature, albeit slowly, as new experiences shaped his goals and outlooks.

The requisite strongman of the group was next. For his human identity, Lee and Kirby borrowed, perhaps unconsciously, the test-pilot occupation that had been discarded from the Challengers' leader-character when he was fused into the scientist-character to become Reed Richards. For his speech pattern, they went to Doc Savage's ape-like Monk Mayfair and the Challs' wrestling champion Rocky Davis, both heroes given to the use of "ain't" and "cuz," although they certainly knew better grammar and were obviously only "playing



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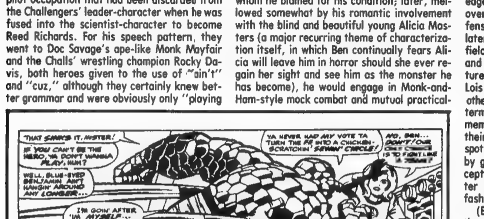
Johnny Storm, The Human Torch, a little later on in his career: "As the youngest of the group...The Torch quickly grew tired of being 'pushed around,' as he saw it, by the older, wiser, and stronger members..."

a role" as "tough guys." And for his power, which must of course be that of super-strength, Benjamin J. "Ben" Grimm was given not a gift, but a curse which would provide the crux of his character development. Unable to change back and forth from normal-appearing human to gaudily-garbed freak at whim like his comrades, he was transformed by the cosmic rays into a huge monstrous creature reminiscent of the world-destroyers whose rampage Lee and Kirby had chronicled in a previous half-decade of Atlas "horror" comics: The Thing. Ironically (an all-time favorite word in comics), it was Ben Grimm who most protested the foursome's moon flight, and he who lost the most by choosing to undertake it. This led to issues upon issues of conflicts with his fellow members: at first, The Thing was wont to fly into violent rages at Reed Richards, whom he blamed for his condition; later, mellowed somewhat by his romantic involvement with the blind and beautiful young Alicia Masters (a major recurring theme of characterization itself, in which Ben continually fears Alicia will leave him in horror should she ever regain her sight and see him as the monster he has become), he would engage in Monk-and-Ham-style mock combat and mutual practical-


"THAT SCARES IT, MISTER!"
IF YOU CAN'T SEE THE HEROIC, YOU DON'T WANNA PLAY, HUH?
WELL, BLIND-EYED BELLHOP, YOU'RE HEADED NORTH-CHA...! S BA...! AROUND IT!
I'M GOIN' AFTER YA FIRST, LIKE NOW!
AWK! AROUND IT! YOU NOT-HEARED NORTH-CHA...! S BA...! AROUND IT!
YA NEVER HAD ANY VOTE TA TURN THE AIR INTO A CHICKEN-SCRATCHIN' SPINNIN' CIRCLE!
AND, BEN, DON'T CALL ONLY ONE OF US "BLIND-EYED BELLHOP" AGAIN!
TELL IT TA MEE-OW!... HEY BUCKO! FEE FI FO FUM! I SMELL SOMETHING GROUCHY!
©1961 Marvel Comics Group

The Thing: "Ben...Grimm was given not a gift, but a curse which would provide the crux of his character development. Unable to change back and forth from normal-appearing human to gaudily-garbed freak at whim like his comrades, he was transformed by the cosmic rays into a huge monstrous creature..."

joking with The Torch; throughout the series, he would have his hopes alternately buoyed and crushed by Reed's continuous but ill-fated attempts to cure his affliction.

The Challengers, and indeed almost every other super-team up to this point in comics, suffered an almost-unnoticed lack of female characters as members. The Challs were forced to bring in June Robbins as a sometime "honorary" Chall to offset the all-male cast, and even then, she quickly became an object of rescue and the constant companion of leader Ace Morgan. With the Ace and Prof surrogates combined in a single character, though, the Fantastic Four had an empty spot in their roster—one which Lee and Kirby filled with a full-fledged, full-time female group member: Susan Storm, the Invisible Girl. As a new idea in comics unto herself, Sue had a few rough edges, some of which are still being smoothed over even today. Her power was a mainly defensive one, that of invisibility, and was only later altered to include the creation of force-fields, a still largely defensive but more useful and spectacular ability. She tended to get captured and held hostage too frequently, a la Lois Lane, June Robbins, and virtually every other girl in '60s comics ("girl" is the correct term; women they weren't). And when each member was given a separate page in which their abilities and personal interests were spotlighted in the first ***FF ANNUAL***, Lee and Kirby gave Sue an embarrassing gamut of "acceptable" feminine pursuits with which to fritter away her spare time: cooking, sewing, fashions, etc.

(Even today, male writers will try to use the excuse that they are unable to write convincing female characters since they themselves have no experience in being females. Presumably, Stan and Jack could not as easily imagine the closest available role-models, namely their respective *wives*, as super-heroines, as successfully as they could translate *themselves* into super-heroines. Hmmm.)

Still and all, Sue was a success, every bit as much as her three teammates, in what she was designed to do. Her relationship to the others, and thus her presence on what would normally (especially in 1961) have been a males-only junket, was explained in that she was Johnny's older sister and Reed's fiancee. None of this hanging about with the guys in hopes of being let in on their games and maybe the oc-

casional peck-on-the-cheek for our Susan—she was a full member of the team, discipliner of the immature Johnny (in the absence of their parents—one deceased, one absent), and object of affection of the admirable Reed. She also had her own personal conflict which provided the springboard for as many adventures as any of the others', or even more: after issue #4, she found her romantic attentions divided between Mr. Fantastic and the at-least equally attractive Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner. The fact that Subby, a once-and-future super-doer on the side of good himself, was at that time considered a major world threat who periodically attempted to destroy The FF and New York City, in that order, mattered not a whit. It was only some four years later, after innumerable encounters and much sorting-out of feelings, that Sue made her choice and married Reed in the third ***FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL***. This in itself was another first: until Reed and Sue, super-characters operated in the tradition of Superman and Lois Lane, and never ever EVER got married, except in dream adventures and "imaginary stories." Still later, Sue broke precedent again by daring to have a child, who did not immediately become a super-powered member of the team while in diapers, and/or a threat to the group. Yet, the course of women's liberation never did run smooth. In breaking with the past, the Invisible Girl set equally strong trends for the future, through no fault of her own. After she became the first female member of a common-origin super-team, it would take another decade (of the common efforts of primarily Roy Thomas and Steve Englehart, *et al*) before a super-team would have more than one female member at a time.

TAKE COVER, DARLING!
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING! I WON'T LET YOU SACRIFICE YOURSELF!
I'LL STRETCH MY BODY OUT LIKE A HUGE SHIELD!
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
IN DOING SUCH A THING TO ME, YOU'RE FEEL-ING, MASTER... YES, BE THE JUDGE!
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

The Invisible Girl: "...the course of women's liberation never did run smooth."

B. ORGANIZATION

An origin that establishes the various characters' powers, personalities, and ***raison d'etre*** for the group is perhaps standard fare for super-teams before and after The Fantastic Four. In the matter of other such "standard fare," however, as in the matter of characterization and in-group conflicts, The FF was destined to throw the rule book out the window, and thus to become the model for all super-teams to follow. First, a team needs a headquarters. Their literary "ancestors" of the immediate past, The Challengers and The Justice League, met in secrecy and solitude in hidden caves and mountain fortresses far from the haunts of those ordinary citizens they were dedicated to protecting. The FF, instead, went back to the basics: like Doc Savage, they had their base in an imposing skyscraper in the heart of downtown Manhattan. Villains wishing to attack them had no need to search for a secret sanctum sanctorum; despite Reed Richards' many and elaborate security devices, the FF's foes had the choice of flying in through the window, bombing them in their rooftop launching bay, or (provided they could gain access thereto) riding up to the 35th floor in an air-conditioned elevator. Thus, the heroes (who ***lived-in*** for the most part, rather than using the HQ only for meetings) had the advantage of being immediately on the scene when a new menace struck, since from aliens to costumed joywalkers all Marvel villains tended to congregate in New York like lemmings on their way to the sea; they likewise had the ***disadvantage*** of being accused of endangering the populace at large whenever a super-foe attacked The Baxter Building in search of revenge. Later Marvel teams would follow this example, as witness The Avengers. (The X-Men, and much later, The Defenders, would make a good case for locating in the suburbs instead.)

Next, a super-team needs a mode of transportation, except in those rare cases when all the members can either fly or otherwise self-propel their persons to the scene of action. The FF, thanks to a membership which boasted both a master of virtually every scientific discipline and an ace mechanic who specialized in custom auto design (to say nothing of a former test pilot who must have had some comprehension of the inner workings of the vehicles he flew), came up with not one, but several unique vehicles which became readily identified with the team and the series. They naturally had a rocketship, based in part on the ill-fated craft of the origin story. They had the strangely-named Pogo Plane, a sub-orbital aircraft for near-instantaneous globe-hopping. For shorter jaunts, they had The Fantasti-Car, which went from resembling a quadro-modular bathtub to a scaled-down space shuttlecraft. And in later issues, for even shorter hops, there was the Jet-Cycle, which could be converted from one-man to multi-member operation. One advantage of this multiplicity of vehicles, aside from the fact that it allowed Jack Kirby's designing talents full rein, was that no matter how many times The FF's ships were wrecked beyond repair in the course of an adventure (perhaps a legacy from their origin), they always had a spare to fall back on.

BUT NOW, IT'S TIME TO TAKE HIM APART... WHERE WE'RE ENGAGED IN A CHILD-REARING SPECIALIST TO LOOK AFTER HIM.!
WHO NEEDS SOME CRUMMY SPECIALIST? I WANT SAM-MITTER WITH ME! !
UNTIL WE SAVE OUR LIVES OF DANGER, BEN... THE LITTLE FELLOW WILL BE SAFER ELSE-WHERE!
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The Baxter Building: "Villains wishing to attack [The FF] had no need to search for a secret sanctum sanctorum."

Of course, it goes without saying that super-teams need costumes. In the case of a common-origin team like The FF, they especially need costumes which all look alike—uniforms, as it were—which signify their membership in a common group. Someone forgot to tell The FF about this rule, and they frolicked innocently thru their first two issues in street-clothes, and perhaps as importantly, without the now-famous Richards invention of "unstable molecules." "Unstable molecules," for the uninitiated, constitute a convenient device by which super-hero costumes take on the attributes of the wearer, becoming invisible, elastic, fire-proof, etc. as the need arises. Thus, in the beginning, Johnny's wardrobe was reduced to ashes with depressing regularity, Sue would often appear as an animated but empty dress, and Ben, like the later Bruce Banner/Hulk, would totally demolish all but his boxer shorts (required by The Comics Code and The Legion of Decency) whenever he so much as flexed his biceps. With issue #3, Sue exercised her bent for fashion and created the now-familiar blue uniforms with white-encircled "4" emblem and black trim. Besides the costumes still worn, with minor changes back and forth over the years, by herself, Reed and Johnny, (who wore a ***red*** outfit like the first Torch's for a while in the '70s), Sue also came

up with a suit for the Thing. In addition to bulky blue coveralls, this costume included a face-concealing mask! Whether unstable molecules were not yet in vogue, or whether even they could not contain the blockbusting Ben Grimm, this uniform went into permanent cold storage after a single wearing. The irascible Thing proclaimed, "I ain't gonna wear this fool outfit!", removed the mask, tore the tunic to shreds, and blustered forth in all his orange-skinned glory. This, together with the fact that the Torch most often appeared aflame, his crimson aspect totally obscuring his blue costume, made The FF a more visually colorful team than other alike-uniformed groups, and no doubt added more to their popularity.

One of the most important aspects of The FF team was that, unlike the formulated teams, which were run like clubs or business organs, and unlike the all-male commcn-origin groups, which had an air of "drinking buddies" about them, The Fantastic Four were a family. With Reed and Sue married, three of the four members were related to each other; it played nicely with the theme of The Thing as outcast and outsider that only he was not tied to the others by blood or wedlock, but only by friendship. With the birth of Franklin Benjamin Richards, child of Reed and Sue, the family aspect was strengthened, and Ben became a godfather and honorary uncle. The family theme added to the wholesomeness of The FF's continuing epic, the feeling that these were characters who would always do the right thing, not because they were cardboard creations who could do naught else but exemplify the straight and narrow, but because they were real people who made real choices as to their actions, and then made the morally correct decisions.

A common tenet of comics to this point in time had been that while single-hero series needed supporting characters for the hero to interact with (or at least talk to, lest he be thought strange), super-team series needed no such "extras" hanging around. After all, with a team the size of even the ***early*** Justice League, surely one non-costumed regular (honorary member Snapper Carr) was enough to supply the stars of the book with conversation beyond the "let's us and him fight" level. A book with several heroes meant that the heroes had ***each other*** to talk to; they needed no one else. Even though The FF could have gotten along without a supporting cast better than most, so well and yet so unpredictably did the four stars mesh, they again did the unexpected and began to develop a repertory company of players other than the team members and the various recurring villains. Some would slip in and out of the book making their presences felt more through the consequences of their actions than through actual appearances: mailman Willie Lumpkin; the Thing's mysterious boyhood nemeses, The Yancy Street Gang; his never-seen but often-mentioned Aunt Petunia; Johnny's seeming legion of girlfriends (before he began going steady with Doris Evans, whom he met in his ***STRANGE TALES*** series, and later, with Crystal of the Inhumans).

MOTHER! FATHER! GOD! HELP!
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE TO GO SWIMMING WITH HOPE, BEN!
OFFICIAL NOTICE BEFORE I BECOME HIS MANAGER!
© 1981 Marvel Comics Group

"With the birth of Franklin Benjamin Richards...the family aspect [of The FF] was strengthened, and Ben became a godfather and honorary uncle."

Others were prominent and visible fixtures: Alicia, Ben's aforementioned blind girlfriend, a sculptress who was the step-daughter of the criminal Puppet Master; Wyatt Wingfoot, strong and soft-spoken Amerindian college classmate of Johnny Storm; Agatha Harkness, Franklin's supernatural babysitter; the hot-and-cold-running super-heroes from the other Marvel titles who showed up at the Baxter Building to help out in emergencies and at celebrations alike (most notably, the Reed/Sue wedding story, in which virtually every other Marvel character extant in 1965, save Sub-Mariner, Giant-Man, The Wasp, and The Hulk, appeared); and of course, the many supercharacters over the years who have been ***introduced*** in the pages of ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** and have gone on to their own series.

Next to ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***, TV's ***ALL IN THE FAMILY***, ***HAPPY DAYS***, and ***MARY TYLER MOORE*** are mere babes-in-arms when it comes to spawning spin-offs. After a fabulous multi-issue epic in which they lost and regained their powers, fought both The Frightful Four and Dr. Doom, teamed up with Daredevil, and had the Thing turn temporarily and disastrously against them (one of the first and greatest Marvel continued stories, not often mentioned now by comics historians, overshadowed as it is by the FF tales immediately following it), the four were to learn that Madame Medusa, erstwhile member of The Frightful Four, was actually one of a hidden race of super-beings called The Inhumans, led by Black Bolt. And hot on the heels of this confrontation came the famed ***"Galactus Trilogy,"*** which introduced the space-spanning Silver Surfer. No sooner did ***he*** fly momentarily into the sunset than the jungle-born Black Panther, comics' first black super-hero, popped up. Even the early FF villains were to get their own series: Sub-Mariner in ***TALES TO ASTONISH*** and his own title; Doctor Doom in ***ASTONISHING TALES***. At one point, so many fascinating characters roamed the pages of the FF's title and so many readers wrote in to request that they join the team permanently that Stan Lee jokingly referred to the book as ***"FANTASTIC FOURTEEN."*** Naturally, given the title of the

THE TIME WAS COME FOR EVERY NATION'S EVERY HOSTILE BLOC:-- TO PUT ASIDE PETTY DIFFERENCES AND UNITE AGAINST A COMMON ENEMY!--PERHAPS THE MOST DEADLY ENEMY WHICH CIVILIZED MAN HAS EVER FACED!
©1981 Marvel Comics Group
OH, BEN--WHAT GOOD CAN ALL THIS DO? HOW CAN ANYTHING STOP DOOM --NOW THAT HE POSSESSES THE POWER OF THE SILVER SURFER?
I DUNNO, SUSIE GAL--BUT, LIKE OL STONEFACE WOULD SAY--AS LONG AS A GUY STILL HAS A BRAIN--AND SOME BACKBONE --HE AIN'T NEVER BEATEN LESS HE WANTS IT TO
BUT, IT'S GONNA TAKE A LOT MORE'N THAT TO GIT US OUTTA THIS MESS!
A STAN LEE ☆ JACK KIRBY MODERN DAY MASTERWORK!
DELINEATION BY: JOE SINNOTT
LETTERING BY: ARTIE SIMEK
A scene from the Doctor Doom/Silver Surfer epic.

comic, as well as the close-knit nature of the cast, any permanent cast changes were out of the question, and the most the other superbeings who appeared could be was guest-stars, or "friends of the family." The FF did require a few temporary replacements for the original members over the years, what with Sue's absences due to pregnancy, motherhood, and separation, Johnny's occasional lone forays, and Ben's several transient "cures," as we shall see in the "membership" roster section of this article, but replacements were all they were. The actual membership of the team remained constant.

A major reason for the popularity of "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine" (and what other book would dare to make that boast!) was its realism, at least as compared with the comics which preceded it. And a major contributing factor to that realism was the lack of the traditional but static "happy ending." Oh, The FF always licked the villains in the end (unless it was a continued story, in which case they licked them after several issues), but as in life, everything wasn't tied up in a neat bundle for our heroes, or for the reader, at the end of a day, or issue. Some problems persisted unsolved, even by Reed Richards' omnivorous intellect: the cure for The Thing; the relieving of Alicia's blindness; a means for Crystal to remain with Johnny after it was discovered that her upbringing in the Inhumans' Great Refuge had left her without a natural immunity to outer-world pollutants. Others were solved, after a fashion, after many heartbreaking issues: the Reed/Sue/Namor romantic triangle; Johnny and Crystal's initial separation, culminating in his loss of her to Quicksilver, a major step in his maturation process; Reed and Sue's temporary separation and reunion; little Franklin's mysterious powers and resultant coma. Still others have found their resolutions or not, as the case may be, in titles other than ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** itself: The Silver Surfer's exile to Earth; The Black Panther's dual role as costumed hero and head of state; Sub-Mariner's struggle to safeguard Atlantis from the surface world; The Thing's efforts to protect Alicia from constant reprisals from his foes; and the final '(?) fates of such supporting players as Thundra, the original Torch, and The Impossible Man.

And of course, The FF would be a soap opera rather than a super-team series without its roster of villains. Foremost of these is Doctor Doom, long the monarch of the tiny kingdom of Latveria, and college-day rival of Reed Richards. With armor to match that of Iron Man, an intellect to challenge Richards' own, plus sorcerous talents inherited from his witch-mother, and (until recently) the protective cloak of diplomatic immunity, Doom was and is a foe to give any super-hero pause.

Then there were the "villains" who became heroes in their own right: Sub-Mariner; The Inhumans; The Silver Surfer; The Black Panther. There were the perennial schemers, each with his own maniacal ax to grind: The Puppet Master, The Mad Thinker (and his Awesome Android); Diablo; The Miracle Man; and countless others. There were the villains The Torch accumulated in his sojourns in ***STRANGE TALES***, who teamed up as The Frightful Four: The Wizard; The Trapster (formerly Paste-Pot Pete); Spider-Man's old enemy, The Sandman; and then-newcomer Madame Medusa (later to be replaced by a different fourth—usually female —each time the evil FF appeared).

Adversaries for The FF came from every conceivable locale: their very first foe, The Mole Man, commanded a subterranean race; their extraterrestrial enemies were many, beginning with the Skrulls of Andromeda (and their FF-powered emissary, The Super-Skrull); and including the Skrulls' ancient rivals, the Kree (thus indirectly making Captain Marvel yet another FF spin-off character). Eventually, they would even travel to other dimensions, including one alternate reality where The Thing was not Ben Grimm, but rather Reed Richards!

The structure of the FF as a team, as we have seen, has had many unique qualities; its organization as a comics feature has had no less. Its longevity is formidable, still going strong after more than 200 issues, and maintaining its status as Marvel's flagship title in this, the company's (and The FF's) 20th anniversary year. Also, while it has had many creative hands stirring the metaphorical broth in recent years, its birth-decade of the 1960s was wholly the property of the team's originators, Lee and Kirby. Jack Kirby drew over 100 consecutive issues, and Stan Lee continued to write the series for another year after his partner's departure; moreover, each and every one of these Lee/Kirby stories has been successfully reprinted at least once since its initial appearance (many, such as the wedding annual, have seen ***several*** reprintings). That constitutes a record that no other comic book series can match. ●

C. MEMBERSHIP

Here follows the official roll call of The Fantastic Four, plus a list of those heroes and heroines who have temporarily filled the ranks in the absence of one or more of the original quartet.

1. ***MISTER FANTASTIC*** (Dr. Reed Richards)
2. ***THE INVISIBLE GIRL*** (Susan Storm Richards)
3. ***THE HUMAN TORCH*** (II) (Johnny Storm)
4. ***THE THING*** (Benjamin J. Grimm)

The replacements

1. ***CRYSTAL, THE ELEMENTAL*** (of The Inhumans)

Replaces The Invisible Girl and serves simultaneously with her in issues ***#81-105***.

2. ***DOCTOR DOOM*** (Victor Von Doom)

Replaces Mr. Fantastic in issue ***#116***.

3. ***MADAME MEDUSA*** (of the Inhumans)

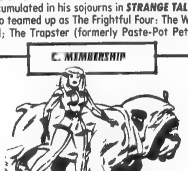
Replaces The Invisible Girl in issues ***#132-159***.

4. ***POWER MAN*** (II) (Luke Cage)

Replaces The Thing in issues ***#168-170***.

5, 6, and 7. ***THUNDRA, TIGRA,*** and ***THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN***

Together with The Thing, these three form a substitute "Fantastic Four" in issue ***#181***.



Crystal of The Inhumans.

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EVIL DOER'S PROFILES

Characters ©1981 Marvel Comics Group

Famous ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** villains spotlighted ***by Richard Howell***

THE SUB-MARINER

Prince Namor, The Sub-Mariner, was created in 1939 and debuted in the ***MOTION PICTURE FUNNIES*** giveaway that year. His origin was reprinted in ***MARVEL COMICS #1*** (also 1939), and he joined that comic's other major feature (The Human Torch) as one of the major four-color figures of the Golden Age of Comics.

Namor was one of the first real anti-heroes in comic books. He was the son of Princess Fen (of the Atlantean race of water-breathing humans) and Captain Leonard McKenzie of America. Fen's and McKenzie's mating was the only peaceful act which occurred between the surface folk and "Homo Mermanus," inasmuch as their first contact destroyed part of Atlantis, which in turn led to the slaughter of the crewmen of the ship responsible, and so on. Namor was raised with his mother, and she inculcated in him a deep hatred of the surface people. When Namor first showed himself to his father's people, it was as their enemy.

This unique and interesting approach to a super-hero character firmly established Namor's presence in the minds of the readers. Before long, The Sub-Mariner was battling The Human Torch in epic-length battles of fire vs. water. Namor was bent on making the surface-world pay for its treatment of his people. Fortunately (for the surface world, at least), early in his "career" Namor met policemen Betty Dean, who convinced him that he should be directing his anger and power at the more immediate threat of the Axis forces—and that they'd talk about his revenge on America after the war, okay?

Betty's ploy worked. Namor worked out his hostilities in a "right cause," and his heroic instincts were never again fully aligned with the causes (and prejudices) of his own sub-sea race. Naturally, that caused friction between Namor and *either* side in the squabble, and The Sub-Mariner was further endeared to the readers by having his own opinions about things—and following them, even if it meant becoming a noble loner (and it did).

Namor returned for a time in the 1950s, and, once again under the control of his creator Bill Everett, fought shark people with the minds of aliens, Communists, a sea creature named Elmer who was afraid of water, and various other oddities. Namor still remained essentially a free agent—strong-willed, quick-tempered, intelligent, wry, and unique.

In the 1960s, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby revived the character as a villain in the non-experimental ***FANTASTIC FOUR*** comics series, and found that Namor fit into the role with only small alterations. With The Sub-Mariner's undersea homeland again destroyed (completely this time) by the unknowing surface people (again), The Sub-Mariner went on a rampage of vengeance and destruction. To newer readers, Namor was a villain, pure and simple. Namor—as before—only held his might in check due to his attraction to a morally-righteous surface woman: The FF's Sue Storm this time. Namor's vengeance on the surface world was never completed, he found his people, lost Sue to Reed Richards, and gained a series of his own.

The 1960s Stan Lee-dictated charges in The Sub-Mariner became more apparent during the character's own series in ***TALES TO ASTONISH*** **(#70-101)**. When the character was re-styled to be a monarch instead of a super-villain, he became massively muscular, lost his "cartoony" flat head, and changed his speech patterns (presumably to give him a more "regal" bearing). In short, he became an underwater Thor, and, although there were compensations, the character lost most of the drive and appeal it had enjoyed as a less responsible, "maverick" anti-hero.

For many years, Namor has waffled back and forth between the classifications of "hero" and "villain," perhaps accounting for the casual reader's inability to latch onto the character's appeal and Namor's resultant bouts with poor sales, redirection, cancellation, and revision. Throughout his career, though, The Sub-Mariner has remained consistent in his innate nobility, his willingness to champion his chosen cause regardless of the opposition, and his attractive aura of mystery and power. The sub-sea monarch's basic appeal remains undimmed, consistent, and powerful despite the number of "surface" alterations he has sustained.

DOCTOR DOOM

Doctor Doom first appeared in Stan Lee's and Jack Kirby's most famous series, ***THE FANTASTIC FOUR***. Obviously, Lee and Kirby had big plans for the metal-clad menace, for in his first stint against The FF, hints were given as to Reed Richards' having known (and feared?) him at some previous time. This was bolstered by references to Doom's nigh-unlimited resources, and his intricately-planned plots.

Indeed, if any Marvel super-villain deserves the title "Master Planner," it is Doom (and not its original user, another AMA reject named Doctor Octopus). Doom's schemes are always complex, and, as a rule, he plays for very high stakes. He has sent The Fantastic Four back through time to recover Blackbeard's treasure for him **(FF #5)**, used The Sub-Mariner against them **(FF #6)**, kidnapped and brainwashed his enemies into believing themselves powerless to leave his McGoohan-esque "village" **(FF #84-8)**, stolen The Silver Surfer's power **(FF #57-60)**, mentally prodded every available super-villain to disrupt the wedding of his rival Reed Richards **(FF ANNUAL #3)**, switched bodies with Reed Richards to usurp control of The FF **(FF #10)**, and trapped the foursome in a room in the path of a space-warping cosmic wave. Despite his considerable power, Doom's appeal owes at least as much to his use of strategy as to his pyrotechnic displays.

Also, a significant part of the character's appeal doubtless lies in his many good qualities and the sympathetic presentation of his descent into super-villainy. He was born a gypsy, and, although brilliant, he bore the prejudice and intolerance of landowners, peasants, and nobles throughout his native Latveria. Both his father and mother were killed as direct results of their heritage, and young Victor Von Doom swore at an early age to make the world pay for their deaths. He also discovered that his mother had been a witch, and he susequently added sorcery to his armaments, along with his deadly cunning and his native scientific genius. Doom's rivalry with Reed Richards is due to Reed's having warned him in advance about a mistake in one of Doom's dangerous experiments (while they were both attending the same college), and its resultant tragedy. The accident allegedly horribly scarred Doom's face, necessitating the metal mask he always wears, which in turn inspired him to dress in full armor. After equipping his armor with a battery of weapons, Doom turned his attention back to Latveria, and, through manipulating the royal family, became its political leader. He dethroned Prince Rudolpho and reigns as absolute monarch of his homeland—usually wisely and well.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Doctor Doom (at least it ties with "Is he a villain?") is his real appearance. The scarred, armored super-villain was unquestionably the boss for Darth Vader, and so has been his own archetype, but while Doom seems to be really scarred, the facts are neither clear nor consistent in Doom's case. His original depiction—as with many Marvel characters—has been diffused somewhat by oversights, misunderstanding, and various milkings of the concept without first understanding it. Yet in a way, Lee and Kirby left themselves open for re-interpretation of the extent of Doom's injuries, for they never fully defined them for the characters, the readers, or for their own successors. In **FF #10**, Doom reveals his his face to Lee and Kirby and they reel back in shock. In ***THOR* #182**, Don Blake was similarly surprised. But in **FF #197**, Sue Richards, Johnny Storm, and Ben Grimm were neither horrified nor surprised at Doom's supposedly-scarred face which they had never seen before. Added to this confusion is Jack Kirby's private theory that Doom only suffers from a tiny hairline scar, and that the shock of the accident and Doom's own ego supplied the rest of his delusion. This working theory of Kirby's is consistent throughout almost all of Doom's appearances until Kirby left Marvel in 1970. (The ***THOR*** instance, drawn by John Buscema, appeared scant months after Kirby's departure.) Why, then, did the Doctor's face in #10 cause such horror? No explanations have been forthcoming, yet when some fans at a West Coast convention asked Kirby to draw Doom without his mask, the artist complied with a shot of the Lord of Latveria sporting the (unscarred) face of...Stan Lee. ●

A PROFESSIONAL

there for the last column. It really wasn't all that good. As a matter of fact this one isn't going to be so good either. And I think you folks deserve an explanation.

It's been getting more and more difficult to write these columns as time goes on. You might know how it is: you come to a project with a whole passel of good ideas, and then—well, maybe I can best tell my story by detailing a conversation I had with my friend Peter Silverman, who works at Bell Labs.

He had called me up one evening, and I confessed my difficulties.

"... and I can't figure out why, either."

"Well, I don't know, but after you've done columns on Death, Sex, the Nature of Art, Consciousness, and Social Responsibility, maybe you've run out of topics?"

"Now, that's easy. You just run the same old junk by 'em again. They won't notice."

"Don't you mean that such deep and primary questions are worth examining repeatedly from different viewpoints?"

"Yeah, sure, what you said."

"Could it be that the current output of the comics industry hasn't given you much grist for your mill?"

"Comics? Who reads comics? I read ***DOONESBURY*** and ***LITTLE ANNIE FANNY*** and leaf through my Roy Lichtenstein books. That's it. Who's got time to read comics?"

"Maybe it's just that you're getting stale on the column."

"Stale? Stale? I'm a ***professional***! And the definition of a professional is—you know what the definition of a professional is?"

"Nope."

"Of course you do. But I'll say it anyway. The true test of a professional is not that he can write when the inspiration strikes him, but that he can grind out a boring piece of embarrassing junk just to meet a deadline."

"But you never meet deadlines."

"That's because I'm an artist."

"I thought you said you were a professional."

"I'm a professional artist. And you know what a professional artist is?"

"Let me guess: He's a man—"

"Or she's a woman. Let's have no sexism here, buddy."

"—who will grind out an embarrassing piece of boring junk—"

"—or vice versa—"

"—to meet a deadline, and then ***not meet*** that deadline."

GUILTY

Listen, I'd like to

"Damn straight. What you said."

There was a long pause over the line. And then Peter said, "I've got an idea. You're forever telling me that comics critics and sometimes artists get away from the primary, basic fun things that attracted them to comics in the first place. Why not do a column on mythology?"

"Hunh?"

"You know, what people get into when they get into Marvel Comics, or even books like ***THE LORD OF THE RINGS***—"

"You seen ***AMERICAN POP*** yet?"

"Uh, no."

"That guy Bakshi sure showed those lameo's at Disney and them old fogeys like Avery and Jones what for. Now ***that's*** animation. Looks just like they were photographs."

"—or ***DUNE*** or the ***LENSMAN*** books by Doc Smith, or even ***STAR WARS***: that sense of a whole universe, of everything interconnecting. Isn't that worth talking about?"

"Sure, buddy." I took another swig of the Sno-Pake bottle I'd been nursing all afternoon. "That's what gives rise to amazing phenomena like Philip Jose Farmer's biographies of Doc Savage and Tarzan, proving that they're related to James Bond and Sherlock Holmes and Harry Flashman and Nayland Smith, and magazines like ***OMNIVERSE***. But I tell ya, continuity can get outta hand."

"I never thought I'd hear you say that."

"Sure I'll say it. I'll shout it from the rooftops: CONTINUITY CAN GET OUTTA—" The phone started to go ***boooooooooooo***...

I hung up and dialed him again. "Sorry, I think I broke a circuit or something."

"That's all right, we'll get you for that."

"Oh yeah, I forgot you worked at Bell Labs."

"Go on. You were saying—?"

"I'll tell you when continuity goes too far. Continuity's OK when you're dealing with a sorta simple, naive world-view where the Frame is pretty much well established. You know, an ordinary three-dimensional, causation-dominated Universe."

"I understand you, but could you repeat that for our studio audience and explain it?"

"Why, sure thing. You got one big whole, one giant panorama, with a place for everything and everything in its place, you know, like one of them huge Post Office WPA murals. You can go 'Gosh wow!' and take it all in. Assimilable. You know. But the continuity idea really becomes a menace when you lose either

FANTASIES

AN ARTIST

A COLUMN BY PETER GILLIS

apologize to all of you out

that unity or that simplicity."

"Oh, you mean like that Earth-One and Earth-Two stuff."

"Hell no, you can't do that! That's just like another magic planet off somewhere where they got a bunch of different super-heroes. They coulda done without Superman, Batman and Robin, though. ***That*** was the appeal: a bunch more colorful superheroes; the appeal lay not in their parallelisms with Earth-One, but with their differences. Look, ya coulda made 'em aliens, except you'd lose the identification appeal. Look: It'd probably be just as popular to team The JLA up with The Legion as it is with The JSA."

"The—Legion?"

"Sure. You read ***BEAU GESTE***." I nearly fell off my chair laughing. And in front of all those people too! "Just joking. I'll explain during the commercial. But the time when continuity gets out of hand is when you leave linear causality behind. You know, divergent realities due to time paradoxes, like in Omniversal Theory, or better yet, mixing of levels and streams. Like Firesign Theater, you know. Or Farmer's multiple pastiches and so on."

"It becomes too big, in other words?"

"Naw. You can get as goddamn big as you want. I mean, how could you get bigger than Jack Kirby's concepts? Jee-zus Kee-rist!"

I saw the producer scowling at me. Whoops! I had forgotten they don't like that sort of afterburner language on TV. "Uh—pardon my French, reverend." ***That*** got a chuckle out of the audience.

"It's when the picture gets twisted and broken up and reconnected, until it becomes like a heap of spaghetti. Or worse yet, until it becomes like a Moebius strip or a Klein bottle, that people get bewildered by the stuff. Why do you think Roosevelt never commissioned Moebius Strips for Post Office walls? I mean, really!"

"But surely with the advent of mass electronic communication and instant simulated exhiliration, today's youth of today are ready for such extended and, oh, obscene—***obscure*** concepts, General?"

"But dammit, Mr. Tirebiter, it ceases to become simple, I tell you! When things start criss-crossing (and let me tell you, they didn't bring Cris down from the cross for nothing!) and overlapping, it loses all its pleasure, its fun!"

"Excuse me General, but it's time to break for commercial. We'll be right back to ***THIS IS YOUR FOREIGN LEGION***, with Lieutenant Bradshaw—"

"That's ***General*** Bradshaw, Tirebiter!"

"—and General Bradshaw Tirebiter, direct from the Central Post Office at Moebius Strip and Alameda Boulevard in the City of the Angels, right after this word from Loosener's Castor Oil Flakes."

"But—but—this is an outrage! This makes no sense! It's too confusing!"

"It's only television, General."

"It's supposed to be a column on comic books!"

"Don't complain to me, General; complain to the guy who's typing this thing!"

"You there! At the typewriter!"

"Yes?"

"How dare you mix levels like this! It's surrealistic! They'll never understand this!"

Tough Bananas, General Tirebiter.

"You've gone completely mad, you know! Arrgh! Now you've got me talking to the same person who's typing my dialogue! This is insane!"

Heh heh heh.

"***This*** is what happens when you let a bunch of goddam intellectuals and dope fiends write about comics! A complete perversion of all that's fun about them!"

Oh, I don't know. It's a different kind of fun, is all. And now, you know what's in store for you, don't you?

"You wouldn't! You fiend! I knew you'd do something like this when I mentioned Firesign Theater!"

Heh heh.

Suddenly the television studio was overrun with The Legion Of Super-Heroes, all wearing Arab Kaffiyahs, dragging down General Bradshaw Tirebiter in a sea of white linen...

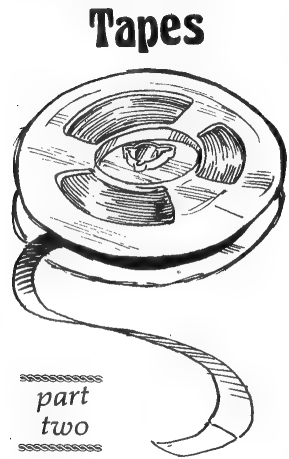
TO BE CONTINUED? ●

CLASSIC CONVERSATIONS

Our oldest and youngest readers might perhaps know *Murphy Anderson* as either the artist on Fiction House's *"Star Pirate"* series, or as one of the best *"Superman"*-inkers ever. Doubtless, though, most of our readers remember Murphy Anderson's long tenure as one of the primary artists on Julius Schwartz's prestigious line of science fiction adventure titles in the 1950s and 1960s, as the artist of *"The Atomic Knights,"* and *HAWKMAN*, the inker of Infantino's *"Adam Strange,"* and the artist for the later *"John Carter of Mars"* series.

This interview was conducted nearly a decade ago, but never before printed. It was conducted by Paul Kupperberg and Carl Gafford for *ETCETERA*, and transcribed by Lee Ann Layton.

The Anderson Tapes



part two

FEATURE: What were things like with Julie at National in the early 1950s?

ANDERSON: Busy! I worked on ***"Captain Comet"*** after Carmine left it, and I did a feature that Edmond Hamilton wrote called ***"Chris KL99"*** for ***STRANGE ADVENTURES.*** And, of course, Hamilton had written the ***"Captain Future"*** stuff.

FEATURE: You seem to have bounced around a bit more than some people realize. What was Murphy Anderson up to between...oh, say the early 1950s and that second stint on ***BUCK ROGERS?***

ANDERSON: Oh, a little of everything. I went back to North Carolina. I bought the "Famous Artists" Course. I intended to become a Famous Artist, you know. (Laughter.) I had one big commercial job that I did in less than a week, and that paid me enough so that I could pay for the course—the advanced course—that was a volume of each of the famous artists. Well, I took the thing. I wanted to go back to where I could live on less money, and I got stuck back in the taxicab business with my dad. I worked there—free-lancing some for Julie, doing an occasional story here and there for Bob Kanigher and a few covers—until ***BUCK ROGERS*** came along again. During that time I'd go to New York maybe four or five times a year and talk over ideas with Julie. We'd work up some cover ideas and I'd go home and do them.

FEATURE: When did you get into inking?

ANDERSON: Well, that was when I came back, after I lost ***BUCK ROGERS*** the second time around. They didn't need me at National. The only thing they had open was inking, and I needed the work. I'd been out of a job for about four or five months, and I was pretty desperate to do anything. That's how I got pushed into inking, and it's very hard to get out of that trap once you get into it.

My first ink job was, I think, one of Carmine's ***FLASH*** stories. Frank Giacoia had been inking the stuff, but he'd had sort of a battle and left National. So I got the job on Carmine's pencils and on a Gil Kane job at about the same time... all more or less back to back. One might have been given to me before the other, I don't recall the exact sequence.

So then, I started bugging Julie for pencilling. About the only thing I could turn up was an occasional science fiction story and ***"The Atomic Knights."*** They started that series basically just to keep me off Julie's back... just to say, "Here, I'm giving you something!" (Laughter)

FEATURE: What was it like to finally have at least a semi-regular series with ***"The Atomic Knights?"***

ANDERSON: Well, I had mixed feelings about the feature. I enjoyed doing ***"The Atomic Knights,"*** but as far as effort goes, I was the loser. It took me half again as long to draw as anything else! Each knight had his own suit of armor... and a definite personality in the way he looked, the clothes he wore. And they usually fought the menace together! All five or six of them involved in it! And naturally the menace had to out-number them. I'd have these crazy panels with 15... 16 characters! I still enjoyed all of this because John Broome wrote a very good script... I always liked to work off his stuff. But, gee! It was just a backbreaker!

FEATURE: The late 1950s and early 1960s at National saw the return of super-heroes. And you certainly saw your share of work on them... just through inking at first...

ANDERSON: Yeah. I was inking some of the early ***GREEN LANTERN*** and ***FLASH*** stories. And then, a little later, ***THE ATOM.*** Gil and I worked on that from the beginning.

FEATURE: And then came ***HAWKMAN.*** Joe Kubert, of course, did the ***BRAVE & BOLD*** tryouts. But when Hawkman appeared in ***MYSTERY IN SPACE*** and later in his own book, the art credits read "Murphy Anderson." You had a book of your own to draw. What was it like? Your own super-hero...

ANDERSON: Well, I thought that ***HAWKMAN*** should have been like ***FLASH GORDON***... a high-adventure kind of thing in a different kind of environment... ***not*** on present-day earth! To me that no longer had any meaning because of modern flight! You could hop a plane and fly anywhere in the world in a matter of hours! It was the time of Sputnik, and there were definite plans being made to put a man on the moon! And what is Hawkman's power? He can fly! Now that

I DO HAVE SUCH A WEAPON IN MIND! YOUR MUTAGENS CONTROL MACHINE!
OF COURSE! BY ACTIVATING THE FLYING GORILLAS' MUTAGENS WHICH GOVERN THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS—YOU CAN CHANGE THEM BACK INTO WINGED MEN AS YOU DO FOR ...—WHEN EVOLUTION RAN WILDERIN ILLORAL!
BY EVOLVING THE GORILLAS TO THEIR ORIGINAL FORMS... I'LL REMOVE THEM FROM MUTANOS'S CONTROL! WITH-OUT THE FLYING GORILLAS TO DO HIS FIGHTING— HE'LL MERELY BE...
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would have meant something on a more primitive world... in a world of, say, someone like Conan! When you think about it Flash Gordon's world was a lot like Conan's... you had a barbaric world with a lot of scientific sorcery.

I used to argue with Julie... so did Joe... that Hawkman shouldn't be just another kind of Batman. That was essentially what he was. On some of those stories you could have just crossed out Hawkman and Hawkgirl and put in Batman and Robin. We weren't making use of what Hawkman could do. I remember in one story the only time he used his wings was when he did a somersault and knocked some crooks over with them. It just wasn't a Hawkman story.

A couple of time, I got Julie to let Hawkman get off-planet. There were the flying gorilla stories, and the dinosaur-beasts, and the trips to Thanagar... I felt those were good **"Hawkmen"** stories.

FEATURE: Kubert had managed to get in a couple of Thanagar stories.

ANDERSON: Yeah! He had the same battles. He fought with Julie. We both had feelings for Hawkman... a picture of the kind of character he should have been. But, of course, Julie had to make the decisions and take the responsibility for the book!

FEATURE: It took a long time for Hawkman to get his own book. Was he ever strong in sales?

ANDERSON: I don't think so. You know, there were some other features that—like ***HAWKMAN***—probably didn't merit their own books, but Julie pushed for them... like **"Dr. Fate & Hourman"** and **"Starman & Black Canary."** They were fun to do, but they didn't sell. Like ***THE SPECTRE!*** Sales on those tryout issues didn't really justify giving him his own magazine.

FEATURE: Maybe ***THE SPECTRE*** never really sold because of the changes. There were continual changes being made in the character, and eventually the format.

ANDERSON: Well, The Spectre was one of the few characters that I couldn't see any way of handling, unless you watered down his powers.

FEATURE: During his incarnation in ***ADVENTURE COMICS***, The Spectre went through the whole 1940s thing of killing evildoers who don't deserve to live. It worked for a while, but it got awfully repetitive.

ANDERSON: Well, when we brought him back the first time there were only two or three stories you could do! The Spectre is virtually God, and who can fight God? Just the devil. So we were faced with, doing virtually the same story over and over unless we watered

down his powers. It was a real problem, and I remember that a lot of fans saw it right away.

FEATURE: What did you think of the way Neal [Adams] handled The Spectre?

ANDERSON: It was very well done. Neal's art is always first-rate, I can't criticize it for that! The stories were just as good as any. There was just the same old problem of trying to find a believable menace for someone with the powers of God.

FEATURE: It was after ***THE SPECTRE*** that you left National to work with Will Eisner?

ANDERSON: Actually, I was working with Will while I was finishing up ***THE SPECTRE*** work. The theory was that I could do a bimonthly book freelance and still work with Will. But I got a little late with some things, and the result was that I went off ***THE SPECTRE***. So I worked with Will on ***PS*** for the Army for almost two and a half years. Then, due to a number of things, it became difficult to handle my freelance time. I was under a lot of pressure... not from Will, but from some other people involved in the production of ***PS*** magazine. So, I made the decision to get back into comic books. That's when I came back... it was 1968-69.

FEATURE: After you came back, you more or less became the regular inker on ***SUPERMAN.***

ANDERSON: Well, at first I was doing a little bit of everything... primarily inking. About that time they decided to put me on ***SUPERMAN***. Of course, I did that science fiction thing, **"Glenn Merritt."** It started out to be a toy character. The script was actually written by Denny to be a book. Another company had a doll similar to Captain Action.

FEATURE: That would have been the Major Matt Mason doll.

ANDERSON: Right! It was to have been another book like ***CAPTAIN ACTION***, but it never got off the ground. So they decided to change the script around a little and use it. They had to find a new name for the character, so I suggested Glen Merritt. It was my brother-in-law's name. He'd been the commander of a nuclear sub, and he'd always been a big science fiction fan. So I suggested Glen Merritt, and Julie loved it! He said that since John Glenn was the first American spaceman—and since the rockets were fired from Merritt Island—it would be a natural. (Laughter) So it became Glenn Merritt! He was even a commander, just like my brother-in-law!

Other than that job, I was mostly inking... maybe doing an occasional pencil job. And then I went on to ***SUPERMAN.***

FEATURE: But after all of that inking, leaving to work for Eisner, and coming back to ink some more with ***SUPERMAN***... all of a sudden you got **"John Carter of Mars."** How did you feel?

ANDERSON: Well, it felt very nice! But it was another bone (Laughter) to keep me satisfied. I'm sure Joe Kubert had his arm twisted, you know. "Just give Murphy something... just get him off my back, will ya?" And my schedule was very tough at the time... which was

why Gray Morrow did the second strip. I made a deal with Joe that if I couldn't get to it all the time, I wouldn't have any hard feelings if he gave it to someone else. I was a couple of days late, so he got Morrow to fill in and then put me back on it. And then later, when the strip was moved into ***WEIRD WORLDS***, there was a big hassle or mix-up or something. It wasn't Denny's fault and it wasn't my fault, but I was late on ***"John Carter"*** and ***SUPERMAN*** as well. I had been doing some extra ***"Superman"*** stuff for a book that wasn't even on the schedule—it was the big Metropolis book that they were bringing out at the time. So I lost a week's time inking that special job, and I kept pushing ***"John Carter"*** back because the ***"Superman"*** work took priority. That caused a big hassle. The book was about 30 days late, which sounds very bad, but I've seen books go out of the house as much as two months late or more. Anyhow, Denny was put on the spot and suddenly, I wasn't on the strip anymore. That kind of thing upset me. It wasn't necessary. They could have come to me and said, "This is the problem and we've got to do something about it." I would've understood. I mean, it started out to be just a fill-in. They wanted me to go on and do the next one, but I felt that I should have been consulted. So, I kind of agreed not to do it. Denny, I think, wanted me to continue with the strip, but I felt very put upon. I guess I shouldn't have. (Laughter) It really hit me—I was trying to work and keep everybody happy on the ***"Superman"*** stuff, and at the same time I was really trying to do something with the ***"John Carter"*** feature. I think it can be especially bad when you've got a continuing story to have other people work on it, because their concept of the strip may be totally different from yours. And that's not saying that either is better, it's just that they're different. And I felt the Burroughs material deserved better than that.

LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD USE AN EXTRA HAND, FRIEND...
FOUR AREN'T ENOUGH FOR YOU, EH?
I WAS MERELY OFFERING THIS CREATURE SOME-EH--SPORT BEFORE FINISHING HIM!
BUT THANK YOU NONE-THELESS...
1981 DC Comics Inc.
"[JOHN CARTER] WAS ANOTHER BONE TO KEEP ME SATISFIED."

FEATURE: But you've really done a little of everything—fantasy, science fiction, even some romance stories.

ANDERSON: Yeah, I did a few for Murray [Boltinoff]. I inked some of John Calnan's work. I even did a few for Ziff-Davis, way back when. As a matter of fact, I think some of my better work was in those romance stories... a bit more realistic than the science fiction stuff.

FEATURE: Let's talk a little about Murphy Anderson, the fan, (Laughter all around) We understand that you've got quite a collection.

ANDERSON: Well, I don't have a big collection, but I've got a lot of old things.

FEATURE: We know that you lost some of your books to National during the time they were planning their case against Fawcett—the Superman versus Captain Marvel fight that no one talks much about. A lot of those books were apparently just lost, and you never got them back. But one book you did get back is ***WHIZ #2***, right?

ANDERSON: Yeah, Jack Schiff gave that to me. I don't if that was one of my books or not, but he'd turned up about five or six old comics that he'd found somewhere, so he gave them to me. That was a number of years ago. Of course, it didn't make up for all of the books I gave them.

FEATURE: Were you a heavy collector during the 1940s?

ANDERSON: No, I just picked up what I liked... what interested me. It was purely for my own personal satisfaction, I never went in for trading. Things that impressed me with technique; things that were a part of me, of what I was trying to do in my own way... that's what I went after. I got, for instance, the first 14 or 15 ***CAPTAIN MARVEL*** comics, ***CAPTAIN AMERICA,*** the first few ***FLASH,*** 15 or 16 ***ALL-STAR COMICS*** with the Justice Society, and quite a few of the old ***BATMAN*** books. Mostly it was Arnold's Quality comics and the Fiction House books that were my favorites. Eisner's touch was there, and I guess that's what I liked. Those books—and I've told this to Sal Harrison and several people who were active at National in those days—those books were far superior in appearance to National's for that period. And the crazy thing was that National had some of the really top artists of the day. It was just that the way they slanted their books was different. It had to do with their use of color and blacks. National's pages seemed to be about 50% or more solid black, but I'd go through a Quality book and there'd be pages where I couldn't find a solid black. I liked that! I felt the book had a nicer appearance and a nicer quality about it. The other stuff looked dark and gloomy, and it just turned me off. It was like Hogarth's ***TARZAN.*** Something about the way he drew Tarzan turned me off. Not the anatomy... not the art... it was that Tarzan should've looked fierce and instead he somehow looked evil. He looked like one of the villains!

But look at Joe Kubert! His Tarzan looked fierce, but he didn't have that evil look.

FEATURE: And yet, the character looked basically the same, it's just the stylistic differences that influence the image.

ANDERSON: Well, Joe is Mr. Comic Book as far as I'm concerned. Joe's got one foot in the realistic approach and the other in what I guess you'd call the impressionistic school. He uses the foreshortening that I see Kirby use, but he brings it off better. Kirby's stuff is not real. Now don't get me wrong! He can draw, just look at his early stuff. He's a master draftsman. It's just that now he's more into a Chester Gould/Dick Tracy kind of thing. But he communicates with it, and that's the name of the game—communication. He's a fantastic talent. I would say he's second only to Will in the impact he's had on the industry. I still think Will was the biggest single influence in comics. A lot of his influence isn't obvious, but he started a lot of the techniques that are still in use. Kirby has had a great effect, but not in the same fashion as Will. Will's impact was not just in drawing, but in layouts and breakdowns and the whole way a story is told.

FEATURE: Eisner has to be the primary storyteller. His Spirit is so timeless! You go back and read stories that are 25 to 30 years old and they're still new and fresh. And in the space of just seven pages, he tells a complete story!

ANDERSON: And that's what comics are all about! You should tell a story that's interesting to the reader and do it in a visual way. You know, there have been efforts in recent years to make comics more adult. I think that's a mistake. It's not that I don't enjoy adult comics, I like to draw them myself. It's just that when you produce a comic for an adult audience, you're missing the mark. Not every reader is a fan who will appreciate what you are doing. Unless you can re-educate the public, I don't think there's going to be much of a mass market for an adult comic book. Unless I've gotten totally out of touch, I don't think the average adult would be caught dead reading a comic book. There's this built-in prejudice about comics being kid stuff.

FEATURE: There may be a greater tolerance now because the adults, the parents of today, grew up on pulps and comics. We've come in contact with a lot of fathers who put up with comic-collecting because they remember hoarding pulp magazines.

ANDERSON: You're getting into an argument I've had with Neal [Adams] and a lot of the other guys. I personally don't read comic books other than to keep up with the field. I don't get the enjoyment out of them that I get from a good science fiction story.

See, the thing is that an artist puts things down the way he visualizes them, and there's not much mistaking about what he has there. The writer, though, uses only words and you can conjure up your own image of what he's talking about. You can use your own imagination. And I think that's one of the drawbacks of comics as a storytelling device. I don't think that you're ever going to replace the printed word... not for the person who wants to think and use his head a little.

FEATURE: It's probably a good bet that the average kid—the one who buys the hundreds of thousands of comics off the newsstands —picks up that comic primarily to look at the pictures.

ANDERSON: Well, the best comic story is one you can read without the words. Of course, you don't get everything, but if you skim through the pages you should get a good idea of what's going on from the pictures alone. I think that's why young kids are attracted to comics.

FEATURE: Russ Heath's work is like that... and Alex Toth! Their work is very visual and you can follow everything through the pictures.

ANDERSON: That's why they are successful... because they are so visual!

Anyway, kids start out with comics. And as the kids mature and get more accustomed to the written word, they leave comics and graduate to science fiction or detective novels or whatever. I have a feeling that comics will always be there, but that basically they should be for kids. I really don't think they're going to satisfy the average adult.

FEATURE: There are a lot of younger people getting into comics now... people like Howard Chaykin and Jim Starlin and others. They don't want comics to be just for the kids. They want comics that they can enjoy.

ANDERSON: I can understand that, but here again we're getting into what I call the False Prophets. (Laughter) I think that attitude, if carried to an extreme, could be the death of comics.

If your market is geared for a 10- or 12-year-old audience, and you bring out stuff that takes an 18-year-old mind to understand, what is going to happen? Unless you can find enough 18-year-olds to buy your book, what is going to happen?

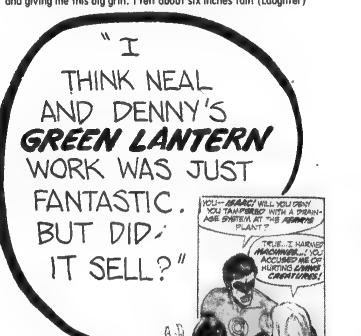
I know that you probably don't agree with what I'm saying. I've had a lot of discussions with the guys on that very subject, and none of them have convinced me yet. And I think the sales figures bear me out. I think Neal and Denny's ***GREEN LANTERN*** work was just fantastic. But did it sell?

I don't think I'm saying anything earthshaking here. I'm sure most of the public could care less. That's why the companies don't go in for that sort of material in a bigger way. I'd prefer to draw that kind of a comic myself. I think I'd get more satisfaction out of it. But I don't mind drawing for kids. And I think that ***KORAK*** was a happy medium. It was interesting to draw, but it was still written on a fairly basic level. There was nothing very complicated or difficult to understand in it.

The answer to reaching the older market, I think, is to try another kind of format. Maybe something like what Gil Kane was trying to do with ***BLACKMARK***. Then you don't need as big an audience to make the thing succesful. That's why Warren's books have survived so long. He didn't need such a mass market to break even.

FEATURE: And with his back issues department, he's got an eventual 100% return.

ANDERSON: He's got it all figured out. Let's say you print 300,000 of the average newsstand comic. You want to sell at least 150,000 of them, and there are maybe 10-15,000 fans. You've got your readership somewhere else, and I think it's just an exercise in futility to try and change adult minds. Boy, if you can ever do it, great! If you could ever change the image of comics, it would be fantastic. But I can still remember an incident that happened to me some years ago. I had picked up some Fiction House books of mine that had just hit the stands. I was on my way down to the syndicate offices in Chicago, and I wanted to read those books in the worst way. Well, I got on an elevated train and there was no one else in the first car. I thought that I'd be able to look at the books for at least the first couple of stops without getting funny looks. So, I sat back with my knee up against the seat and started going through them. After a while I looked up and the door to the engineer's cab was open. And the engineer was looking down at me and my comics and giving me this big grin. I felt about six inches tall! (Laughter)


"I THINK NEAL AND DENNY'S GREEN LANTERN WORK WAS JUST FANTASTIC. BUT DID IT SELL?"
YOU--GRAACK! WILL YOU DENY YOU TAMPERED WITH A BRAIN-AGE SYSTEM AT THIS ARMORS PLANT?
TRUE. I HARMED MACHINERY. YOU ACCUSED ME OF HURTING ALIEN CREATURES!
© 1981 DC Comics Inc.
DIDN'T IT OCCUR TO YOU THAT GLOWING CHARACTER MIGHT SUFFER AS A RESULT OF YOUR VISITS?

FEATURE: Just about everyone who's ever reached a certain age and still collected comics has gotten more than a few funny looks.

ANDERSON: I'm saying that's what you've got to overcome. In Europe, comics don't seem to have that stigma attached to them. In this country they do. That just the way the things happened to develop. Adults laugh at the idea of reading comic books, yet a lot of them follow newspaper comics religiously. Will had a certain amount of success with The Spirit because he was able to get at an adult market through the newspapers. Isn't that crazy? It was still a comic book, but it appeared in the newspapers so it was all right. That's where you get the adult readership. And I think that was

AND SOON...
HURRAH! KADEY AND HIS GANG HAVE BEEN ARRESTED--BY THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS!
NOW WE'LL BE FREE TO ELECT OUR OWN GOVERNMENT IN THIS ZONE!
THAT'S THE DEMOCRATIC WAY!
© 1981 DC Comics Inc.

"I ENJOYED DOING 'THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS,' BUT AS FAR AS EFFORT GOES, I WAS THE LOSER."

proven out when Harvey tried The Spirit as a comic book in the mid-sixties. It just didn't make it.

If you try to produce it for big, mass circulation the market just isn't there. Not even for The Spirit, as beautiful as it's done!

I talked to Will not too long ago about all of this. The problem is that to turn out what he would like takes money, and you just can't get a budget. No publisher wants to give him enough money to get the kind of talent he wants. He had some sort of deal cooking with Stan Lee and money was the problem. He could get some of the big names of comics—books and strips—to join in on the work, but the market is such that no one is willing to gamble that kind of money.

FEATURE: Let's talk a little about ***PS*** magazine. We know you've been working on ***PS*** since you left National, but a lot of readers are probably in the dark as to just what ***PS*** is.

ANDERSON: Well, ***PS*** is a preventive monthly for the Army, and it's basically designed to get the younger guys to read their technical manuals. It presents technical information in a humorous fashion with pictures and comics to grab his attention. And it's highly successful! You can go to almost any U.S. Army base and tell how well their equipment is maintained by the size of their ***PS*** library... their collection of the magazines. And it's very satisfying to be greeted when you walk into some place on an army post. They know all about the magazine and the characters in it. That gives you a nice feeling. It makes you think that you're doing something worthwhile. It's different from talking to comic fans. You ***know*** they're fanatics! And, of course, it's very flattering that fans like what you do, but this is like having your wife or your mother and father appreciate your work. The general public could care less about what you're doing in comics. But when you go out and meet people that represent part of that public, and they're aware of what you're doing—not only aware, but appreciative—that means something! I'm really impressed when I go out to an army post and get that kind of reaction!

FEATURE: Just what exactly is your role in the making of ***PS***?

ANDERSON: Well, I'm the art contractor and it's up to me to produce the magazine. Of course, I'm involved in more than just the production. I do most of the lead artwork and I have to see to it that all of the technical artwork is done accurately. And, of course, I have to keep up the continuity. That's where I get to write my own material!

FEATURE: Then comics figure quite a bit in ***PS***?

ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, in the continuity! The center of the book is an 8-page, full-color, comic section—and the covers are done in full-color. You see, after the army's writers finish up all of their research for the articles, they write down all of the basic points they want me to cover in the comic section. They select a topic and send along all of the specific information that has to be incorporated in the story. Then it's up to me as the art contractor to take those hard facts, come up with a storyline, and get the message across in a humorous fashion.

FEATURE: Speaking of humor, how about favoring us with some of your world famous puns? (Laughter all around)

ANDERSON: Gee, I was saving all of those for ***PS*** magazine. I've got one little article that has a bad one. It deals with synchronization of the blades on a new helicopter. If the blades aren't in proper sync, you don't get the proper lift. Anyway, I've got this cartoon of this fellow flying along in his copter and he says, "When flying over water, I always say, 'It's sync or swim!'"

(Laughter generously punctuated with groans.)

I don't know if that gag will get past the editors, but we'll find out! ●

From time to time,
COMICS FEATURE
will present more
"Classic Conversations"
which we feel are of timeless interest to our readers.
We hope you enjoyed this talk with one of the great artists of the 1950s and 1960s—
MURPHY ANDERSON.

Many thanks to Paul Kupperberg, Carl Gafford, Lee Ann Layton, and Roger Stern.

End NOTES

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Take heed, those among you who fear a decline of standards in today's world. In my other life, in which I teach freshman composition classes, I recently asked my students to write about the most impressive television programs they had ever seen. One pupil chose to respond by praising what he considered to be the superb animation techniques used on (you had best make sure you are sitting down, friends) ***THE FLINTSTONES.*** Disturbing thoughts went through my mind. I am ten years older than my students; I can remember back to the late 1950s when the first "limited" animation series made for television, such as Hanna-Barbera's ***HUCKLEBERRY HOUND*** and Jay Ward's ***ROCKY AND HIS FRIENDS,*** were making their debuts. Back then a considerable proportion of the cartoons being televised were old "full" animation theatrical cartoons: Disneys, Warners, Fleishers, Lantzes, MGMs and even Terrytoons and Famous Studios cartoons. Most of these can still be found on television today, but they are now greatly outnumbered by over twenty years' worth of made-for-television cartoons. Could it be, I wondered on reading this student's paper, that there are now people growing up who have seen so few "full" animation cartoons that they think that the slickest of the Saturday morning-style product achieves some sort of artistic excellence?

Surely their elders know better. But no, all one needs do to destroy that hope is to see how many film critics have nodded their agreement with the advertising slogan for Ralph Bakshi's current film ***AMERICAN POP,*** "the state of the art in living animation." One would think they would have perceived how earthbound its animation is, relying as it does so heavily on imitating live action film, or that they would have wondered why a film about realistic-looking people in realistic situations taking place in realistic settings—few of which were drawn in a particularly evocative or stylized manner—need be done in animation at all. But they did not.

Among my other comments that I wrote on that student's paper, I advised him to go see Walt Disney's ***FANTASIA,*** which, at the time I am writing this column, is again in re-release in the New York City area. ***FANTASIA*** may now be forty-one years old, but it surely deserves that "state of the art" designation far more than Bakshi's film.

It is not my purpose here to discuss the visual beauty of ***FANTASIA.*** I will only say that readers should not balk at going to see the film again merely because they are familiar with the stories its sequences tell. Such familiarity will allow one to devote more attention to the visual aspects of the film: the animation itself, the craft in the drawing of the figures, the beauty of the backgrounds, the color. Nor am I out to discuss how dramatically effective the film is. Unfortunately, whenever one embarks on an academic analysis of a work of entertainment, the fact that the work is indeed entertaining often seems to get lost. Very well then, I hereby acknowledge that ***FANTASIA*** is brilliantly funny in its comedy sequences, and equally effective, in its "serious" segments, in creating a sense of pure awesomeness.

My intention, instead, is to investigate some of the underlying reasons for the film's dramatic power. ***FANTASIA*** is a film that uses animation's ability to depict the fantastic, that which is larger than life, in order to deal with the mythic and the archetypal. It is clear that ***FANTASIA*** deals with subjects of an epic scale: the creation of the Earth and the evolution of life, the war between the forces of Hell and those of heaven, and the gods of Greco-Roman mythology. Audiences are probably only intuitively aware, if that, that ***FANTASIA*** has epic themes as well. Perhaps not even its creators were fully aware of how well ***FANTASIA*** works not simply as an assemblage of eight separate cinematic pieces, but as a thematic ally-united whole.

FANTASIA, as its name suggests, consists of a series of animated sequences, each of which is a fantasy inspired by the music which accompanies it. The film can also be divided into halves which parallel each other structurally.

The first segment of each half is live action, and serves as an introduction, or overture, if you prefer. At the beginning of the first half of the film, the members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who perform the film's score, walk on and tune up their instruments. The mood is serious and dignified. At the beginning of the second half the orchestra appears again, this time relaxing, laughing, and playing snatches of popular music.

The introductions are each followed by abstract animation sequences: Bach's ***"Toccata and Fugue in D Minor"*** in the first half, and in the second a comical interlude with a "shy" animated sound track which assumes various multicolored shapes and patterns in response to various musical sounds.

Then follow sequences depicting the world of nature: Tschaikovsky's ***"Nutcracker Suite"*** and Beethoven's ***"Pastoral Symphony."***

These are followed by comedies involving "funny animals": Dukas' ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice,"*** starring Mickey Mouse in the title role, and Ponchielli's ***"Dance of the Hours,"*** as performed by a balletic troupe of ostriches, hippopotamuses, elephants and crocodiles.

Each half ends with a sequence characterized by dark images of death and evil: Stravinsky's ***"The Rite of Spring"*** in the first half, and a sequence combining Mussorgsky's ***"Night on Bald Mountain"*** and Schubert's ***"Ave Maria"*** in the second. The last image of the first half, which begins so solemnly, is that of an eclipsed, setting sun. The last image of the second half, which begins so comically, is that of a glorious sunrise.

These introductions and concluding images are the key to understanding the overall structure of ***FANTASIA.*** Each of the halves of the film deals with the same kind of material, but whereas the first half treats it solemnly, and, as we shall see, finally even despairingly, the film's second half treats it brightly, optimistically, and triumphantly. ***FANTASIA***'s structure is cyclic: the first passage through the cycle is grim, but the final passage is joyous. As we shall also see, there are cycles of other sorts in the film as well.

The Bach segment has no story, but rather plays with abstract shapes and colors. The close of the sequence may have some meaning beyond this, though. At the end we are given the images of the orchestra's conductor, Leopold Stokowski, summoning comet-like bodies of light to the accompaniment of the music, and finally being surrounded by radiance as if

he were the sun. It is an inspiring image of the glories of art that man can create.

The next sequence, ***"The Nutcracker Suite,"*** is also inspiring in its depiction of the beauty of nature, perhaps beooming most dazzling with the images of the whirling, intricately patterned, highly magnified snowflakes at the end. This first story sequence of the film, in sharp contrast to the later ones, concentrates on the small: flowers, leaves, mushrooms, thistles, fish, snowflakes and the tiny fairies who bring many of them to life. Nevertheless, like the other sequences, ***"Nutcracker"*** too has an epic sweep, giving the viewers the sense that the tiny world to which it confines itself represents all of nature and is full of myriad kinds of wonderful and beautiful creatures.

Nevertheless, the sequence is characterized not by light but by darkness, even though the fairies at the beginning, who bring the life-giving dew that makes the flowers blossom and give some of the plants anthropomorphic life, apparently herald the coming both of dawn and of Spring. The mushrooms perform their celebrated dance in a spotlight surrounded by darkness; the fish perform The Arabian Dance amid the shadows of a murky underwater world. The segment ends with leaves changing color and dropping from the trees, and thus, in short, dying, the water being covered by ice by the skating winter fairies, and the world of living vegetation being blanketed by those lovely snowflakes. The end of the ***"Nutcracker"*** sequence creates a sense of grandeur, serenity and beauty, but it has also depicted death. The sequence has moved along the seasonal cycle from Spring, and the coming to life of the world of plants and animals, through fall and finally to Winter, when much of the world of nature lies dormant. The end of the ***"Nutcracker"*** sequence may be inspirational, but it closes with the end of a full turn of the seasonal cycle, and does not move into the next turn. The sequence is lovely but literally and, in part, figuratively dark. It moves from Spring to Winter, and from birth to death.

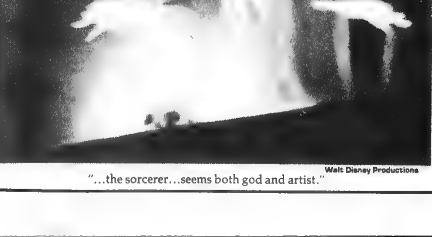
"Nutcracker" also introduces the imagery of gods into the film: both the coming of spring and the onset of winter are depicted as the work of supernatural beings, the fairies. On the other hand, one might very well also see godlike imagery in Stokowski's conjuring of light, shape and sound in the Bach segment. Indeed, the image of conductor-god recurs in the very next sequence.

Like ***"Nutcracker,"*** ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"*** seems at first glance not to be on an epic scale: it centers, after all, on but one figure, that of Mickey Mouse. But it quickly moves to an epic scale, with its army of animated, marching brooms and its enormous flood. Moreover, ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"*** is a story of an ordinary human (represented by an anthropomorphic mouse) who gains godlike powers. It is, indeed, a comedic variation on the Faust legend. In the dream sequence within ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice,"*** Mickey rises to a peak high above the rest of the world and of mankind, from which, conductor-like, he summons comets and waves with sweeps of his hand. Mickey seems to have escaped human limitations just as he has escaped the cycle of his everyday life.

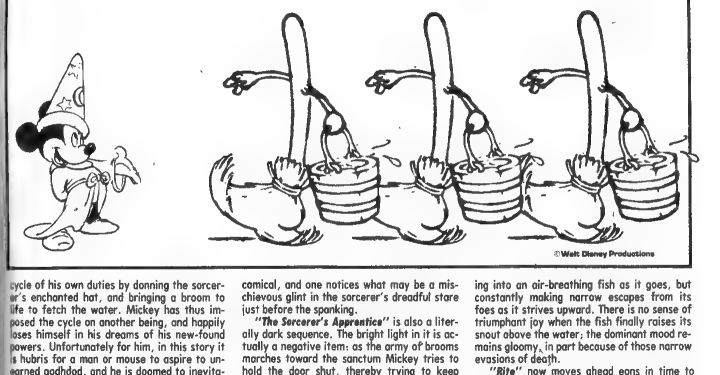
"The Nutcracker Suite" is also inpiring in its depiction of the beauty of nature...Nevertheless...*"Nutcracker"* too has an epic sweep."

Here is another kind of cycle. When we first see Mickey in ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice,"*** he is engaged in the wearying, interminable task of fetching water from an outside well to fill a vat inside his master's sanctum. His master, the sorcerer, is a tall, elderly, impressively and frighteningly grim figure who has imposed this cycle of behavior on Mickey, and who, like Stokowski in the Bach segment, seems both god and artist, creating beauty from colors. We see the sorcerer conjure the image of a grotesque bat and then transform it into that of a radiantly colorful butterfly. Note that when Mickey gains magical powers he uses them for self-aggrandizement, to relieve himself of having to perform tiresome work, and, in the dream sequences, simply to show off his new-found abilities. He is not creating art.

Mickey attempts to free himself from the



"...the sorcerer...seems both god and artist."



cycle of his own duties by donning the sorcerer's enchanted hat, and bringing a broom to life to fetch the water. Mickey has thus imposed the cycle on another being, and happily loses himself in his dreams of his new-found powers. Unfortunately for him, in this story it is hubris for a man or mouse to aspire to unearned godhood, and he is doomed to inevitable failure. Mickey wakes to find that the broom's cycle of work has not stopped, and that he cannot stop it. The broom will keep filling the vat eternally, and as a result the vat is now full to overflowing, and the sanctum is full of water up to Mickey's waist. Mickey attempts to halt the cycle by chopping the broom into splinters with an axe, but each splinter grows into a new broom, each dedicated to carrying out the endless cyclical task of fetching water. Self-multiplication is often a manifestation of power in animated cartoon comedies. (See for example the end of Tex Avery's ***NORTHWEST HOUNDED POLICE***, in which we learn that hundreds of Droopys have united to imprison the convict wolf.) Here the power opposing Mickey, that of the broom, his own Frankenstein's monster, has been multiplied seemingly countless times. The orderly march of the brooms in their endless cycle now creates absolute chaos for Mickey, and the brooms' disastrous cycle is mirrored in the giant cyclical whirlpool in which the helpless mouse becomes entrapped, as he spirals to his doom.

Luckily the godlike sorcerer returns and supernaturally breaks the cycle of destruction, dissipating the flood and transforming the army of brooms back into one normal, inanimate one. The sorcerer, one observes, accomplishes the great feat bare-headed: it takes more than a hat to turn a mouse into a god. The sorcerer also does it with conductor-like sweeps of his arms. Knowing what the sorcerer expects of him, Mickey surrenders the hat and reenters the cycle of fetching water himself, thus returning to a place in life that is more befitting him. The sorcerer punishes him with a spank from the broom, but the effect is comical, and one notices what may be a mischievous glint in the sorcerer's dreadful stare just before the spanking.

"The Sorcerer's Apprentice" is also a literally dark sequence. The bright light in it is actually a negative item: as the army of brooms marches toward the sanctum Mickey tries to hold the door shut, thereby trying to keep both the brooms and the bright light from the courtyard out. He fails in both tasks. The story is about the futility of man's efforts to transcend his limitations. Like the ***"Nutcracker"*** sequence, ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"*** gains the audience's approval for the events it depicts. We watch order being given to the world by supernatural beings (the fairies and the sorcerer) and the outcome in each case is perfectly acceptable. ***"Nutcracker"*** induces us to accept the coming of Winter and ***"The Sorcerer's Apprentice"*** reconciles us to accepting human limitations. But neither sequence offers the possibility of transcendence that was portrayed in the closing images of ***"Toccata and Fugue."***

With ***"The Rite of Spring"*** the film comes closest to evoking despair. Here, too, darkness—indeed utter blackness—predominates, whether in the void of outer space or the hides of the monstrous prehistoric reptiles. In ***"The Rite of Spring,"*** bright light brings death: light fills the desert through which, toward the end of the segment, the thirsting, starving dinosaurs travel on their death march.

No godlike beings are visible in the world of this sequence. It is a world of awesome forces, but also one of harshness, cruelty, and above all, death. ***"Rite..."*** begins with a view of the Milky Way galaxy, far away, looking tiny amid the huge, eerie "emptiness" (as the film's narrator, composer-critic Deems Taylor, specifically terms it) and blackness of outer space. We watch the Earth in its early stage, covered with volcanoes erupting ominous towers of flame. Life evolves through a grim, somber montage of scenes. In the last of these we watch a creature swimming ever upward towards the surface of the water, evolving into an air-breathing fish as it goes, but constantly making narrow escapes from its foes as it strives upward. There is no sense of triumphant joy when the fish finally raises its snout above the water; the dominant mood remains gloomy, in part because of those narrow evasions of death.

"Rite" now moves ahead eons in time to show us the dinosaurs and other creatures of their era, all magnificent and fascinating to watch. But there is nothing vital, exhilirating or transcendent about this world. It is best characterized by its eternal darkness and, shockingly, by the presence and power of death. Audiences gasp when a monster suddenly rises from the water and seizes a swooping pteranodon by the neck. But the dominant figure of ***"Rite"*** is the huge tyrannosaur who arrives amidst a terrible storm, and from whom all the other dinosaurs flee in absolute terror for their lives. If there is a godlike being in ***"The Rites of Spring,"*** it is this tyrannosaur, the embodiment of evil and death. A slow-moving stegosaur, whose mortal fear is movingly conveyed through its facial expression without its becoming anthropomorphic, puts up a valiant battle against this monster, but to no avail: the poor beast is slaughtered—horrifyingly—and the tyrannosaur raises its ghastly head to the lightning-filled heavens in sinister triumph.

This horribly imperfect world must undergo a purging, and so it does. The climate radically changes, Earth becomes an arid planet, and the dinosaurs all die in their pathetic search for water. The film lingers on a closeup of a tyrannosaur skull in order to drive the point home. Earthquakes then ravage the surface of the now seemingly lifeless world. The eclipsed sun sinks behind the Earth, which floats in emptiness, as in the beginning of the sequence. The purging of evil has been completed.

We of course know that all life did not end with the passing of the dinosaurs. Other forms of life persisted, and mammals became the dominant form of animals. But there are no

"The Rite of Spring offers...no hope for the future."

animals of any kind to be seen at the end of ***"Rite"***... nor any plants. Earth seems entirely barren, just as it was at the beginning. Like Mickey returning to his duties, Earth has gone full circle in the course of the sequence. Perhaps Earth is worse off at the ending: at least at the beginning it showed activity through the volcanoes. No, ***"The Rite of Spring"*** offers absolutely no hope for the future. The life that Earth spawned was wrong and had to be destroyed. Order was restored at the price of making Earth a desolate planet. ***"Rite,"*** too, depicts a cycle: it moves from the birth of a planet and of its life to an all-consuming death. So ends the film's first half.

Again now we find a cycle in ***FANTASIA***: the second half of the film will move along a similar structural path to that of the first half, but this time that movement will be optimistic, not ultimately pessimistic. The second half will redeem the first. This brighter tone is set by the relaxing interlude with the orchestra and the amusing encounter with the anthropomorphic sound track.

"The Pastoral Symphony," like ***"The Nutcracker Suite"*** segment, deals with the world of nature, but whereas darkness predominated in ***"Nutcracker," "The Pastoral Symphony"*** sequence is filled with light and bright colors.

Another major difference between the two is that ***"Pastoral,"*** unlike ***"Nutcracker,"*** deals with a community of human-like beings: dentaurs, fauns, cherubs, as well as unicorns and winged horses who all possess human-like personalities. These beings lack the savagery ascribed to many of them in the myths; instead, they project great charm and appeal. ***"Pastoral"*** moves from dealing with playful children, in the form of the winged horses and the fauns, to portraying idealized young lovers, the centaurs, to staging a wonderfully merry festival, complete with its archetypal Lord of Misrule, Bacchus. Like the centaurs and fauns, there is nothing threatening about this Bacchus as there is in his counterpart in the myths. ***FANTASIA*** is using these characters for its own purposes, to create a portrait of the golden age of legend. Hence this Bacchus is a lovable buffoon who embodies the spirit of playful frolic in which the happy community is engaged.

The festival is suddenly interrupted by the appearance of Zeus, who is portrayed as a powerful giant, before whom the members of the community are no more than ants. Like the tyrannosaur of ***"The Rite of Spring"*** who suddenly appeared among the community of herbivorous dinosaurs, Zeus comes amidst a storm, and the festival's participants flee from him even as the other dinosaurs did from the tyrannosaur. Again there is a slow-moving innocent who is not able to outrace the godlike menace and thus becomes his target: Bacchus himself, who, as noted, is the very symbol of communal joy. Significantly, the other characters who are most imperiled by Zeus' lightning bolts and storm are the children, notably a baby unicorn who has to be rescued from the rising waters by a girl centaur.

But ultimately Zeus poses no real threat. No one is hurt, luckily, and Bacchus is actually pleased when, after Zeus blasts a vat, he finds himself sitting waist-deep in wine. Zeus and his bolt-maker Vulcan are simply playing a game, as far as they themselves are concerned, and Zeus finally gets tired, literally kicks off his sandals as a weary man might after a hard day at the office, and goes to sleep. The deities may be dangerous, but they are hardly sinister. In the world of ***"Pastoral,"*** dangers can be survived. Zeus is finally a rather comical death god.

The water that formerly threatened to drown the baby animals now takes the form of puddles in which they and the cherubs play, and which reflects the bright colors of the overhead rainbow, the Biblical symbol of God's restored good will towards humanity. The water is no longer a symbol of death but one of renewal. Moreover, the gods who now appear, those of the rainbow, the sun, night, and the moon, bring peace and beauty to the community. As in ***"Nutcracker,"*** supernatural beings watch over the world of nature. The sun god waves to the members of the community in token of friendship between the

"The Pastoral Symphony"...deals with a community of human-like beings."
"FANTASIA is using these characters...to create a portrait of the golden age of legend."
©Walt Disney Productions

gods and the human-like community they care for.

Like ***"Nutcracker,"*** the ***"Pastoral"*** sequence depicts a natural cycle: here it is the passage from morning to night. Night brings peace and rest to the community, which remains intact and unharmed, with the bright future promised by the rainbow lying before them. ***"Pastoral"*** also portrays another cycle: the movement from a utopian order through disorder and the danger of death into utopian order again, this one possibly, considering the romances that blossomed that day, an even better one than before.

"Dance of the Hours" parallels ***"Sorcerer's Apprentice"*** in that both are "funny animal" comedies. Like Mickey, the animals of ***"Dance..."*** are foolishly pretentious: they think they can be skilled ballet dancers. But ***"Dance..."*** is not about futility, and appropriately this sequence is dominated by light, not darkness. The animals' ballet is absurd, but they succeed in their own fashion in performing it, and in the process of this ordered chaos creating an atmosphere of triumphant joy. ***"Dance..."*** is another revel by a community, like that in ***"Pastoral,"*** but this one is uninterrupted and reaches an even higher peak of exuberance.

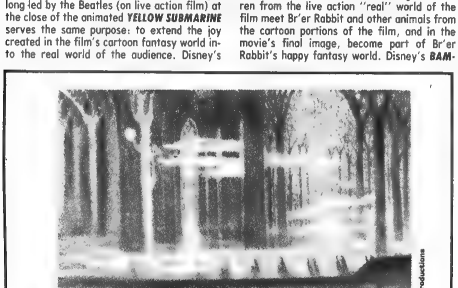
In its final sequence, ***FANTASIA*** states its themes most explicitly. Narrator Taylor informs us that the segment deals with the conflict between "the sacred and the profane." ***"Night on Bald Mountain"*** presents another communal festival, but this one is held by a community of the dead and the demoniacal. Presiding over it is Chernobog, a devil as enormous as ***"Pastoral"***'s Zeus, a satanic Lord of Misrule who is an even more frightful image of a death god than ***"Rite"***'s tyrannosaur. But Chernobog and his forces are driven back by the sound of bells, presumably church bells, and the growing light of dawn. As in ***"Rite,"*** evil is purged from the world, but this time there is something to replace it. As ***"Night on Bald Mountain"*** segues into ***"Ave Maria,"*** night turns into day, darkness is supplanted by light, evil gives way to spirituality, and death is succeeded by renewed life. The community of nuns we view in long shot, all carrying brightly shining candles, have driven back the menace not through the Faustian power the sorcerer's apprentice sought, but through sheer human goodness and devotion to their unseen God, the last of the film's supernatural figures. From the small but intense lights of the nuns' candles the film moves to its final image, that of the brilliant rays from the sun that is about to appear on the horizon.

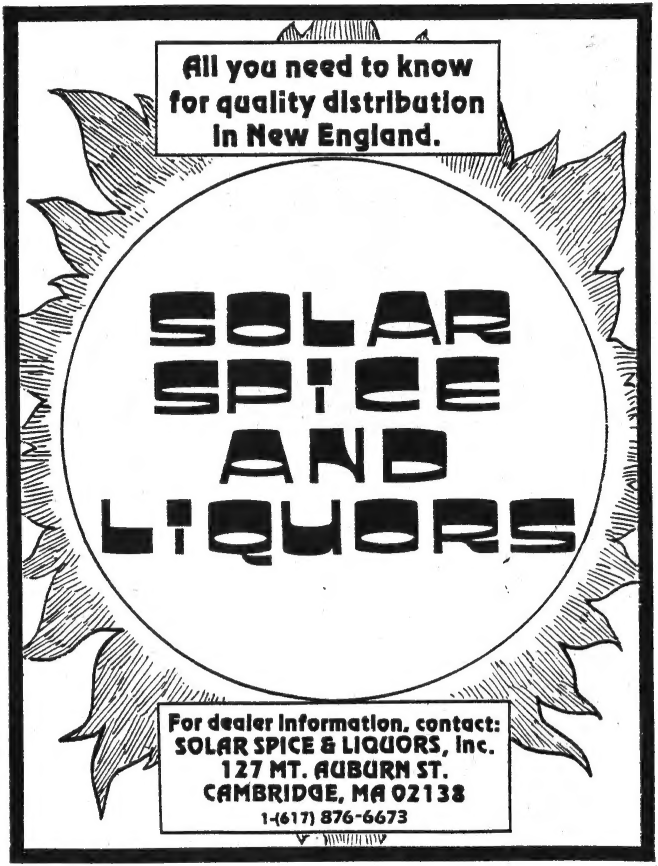
To my mind the visual images accompanying ***"Ave Maria"*** are not dramatically effective, especially after the tremendous power of ***"Night on Bald Mountain,"*** but the intentions behind them are clear. I find it interesting, thinking back over the full-length animated films I have seen over the last nine months, how many of them end with images of ongoing renewal or transcendence. At the end of Disney's ***SLEEPING BEAUTY*** Princess Aurora and Prince Philip, dancing in celebration of their union, spin away (circular movements, one notes) into the clouds. Aurora's dress magically (and cyclically) beautifully changing color from pink to blue and over again, until the moment is finally made eternal by being shown to become an illustration in a book. The celebratory song and dance that concludes Disney's ***THE ARISTOCATS*** transcends space: all of the

film's characters except the banished villain hear it no matter how far apart they are from each other. At the end of Chuck Jones' and Abe Levitow's little-seen ***THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH*** we learn that the enchanted booth of the title, which serves as a gateway to a fantasy world, has just reappeared in another

Above, the demon of Bald Mountain. Below, *"Ave Maria."*

boy's house. The implication is that it will continue to work its magic, and may well someday appear to you, as well. The audience singalong led by the Beatles (on live action film) at the close of the animated ***YELLOW SUBMARINE*** serves the same purpose: to extend the joy created in the film's cartoon fantasy world into the real world of the audience. Disney's ***SONG OF THE SOUTH*** ends with a kind of apotheosis that provides another variation on the idea, in which Uncle Remus and the good children from the live action "real" world of the film meet Br'er Rabbit and other animals from the cartoon portions of the film, and in the movie's final image, become part of Br'er Rabbit's happy fantasy world. Disney's ***BAMBI;*** which I last saw some years ago, ends cyclically by repeating its beginning through the birth of a new fawn, who this time is Bambi's son, while the former fawn Bambi has now ascended to his father's godlike role as master of the herd of deer. Even Chuck Jones' compilation film, ***THE BUGS BUNNY-ROAD RUNNER MOVIE***, ends with images of cycles and transcendence. The Coyote, at the close of the ***"Road Runner"*** sequence, was shot into space and apparently transformed into a constellation picturing himself holding a bow and arrow, in parody of the fates of certain heroes of myth. Now the film returns to that image, and shows us a Road Runner constellation as well; the Coyote constellation fires the arrow, which, not unexpectedly, misses, and he chases the Road Runner constellation into the depths of space while narrator Bugs Bunny extols the spirit of comedy and the happiness it brings to people. By implication, the Coyote's futile pursuit of the Road Runner will last eternally, but it and they have taken on higher meaning, that of the essence of the spirit of comedy Bugs praises. Even ***AMERICAN POP*** tries for an uplifting image of joy and triumph at its conclusion, but its portrayal of the success of its obnoxious, grim New Wave musician hero as a rock concert performer cannot begin to match the power of the endings of the great animated features which use the medium of cartoons to make transcendent fantasies momentarily seem real.●

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